

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan



A Blueprint for Community Building



Created by Lions Park Neighborhood Residents &
Revitalization Staff of the
Planning & Community Development Department

City of Norman

Norman, Oklahoma

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Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

I. Executive Summary

The Neighborhood

Bounded by Main Street, Flood Avenue, Boyd Street and Berry Road, there is much to love about Lions Park Neighborhood. With tree-lined streets, solid housing stock, parks and schools, and numerous long-term residents, Lions Park is a healthy neighborhood with a strong identity *just as it is*.

The Planning Process

The *Lions Park Neighborhood Plan* lays out a concept for protection and maintenance of these elements best summarized as “*strengthen what we have*.” The neighborhood planning process seeks to identify neighborhood assets and make plans to protect them; to enhance a sense of community and connectedness among neighbors, and to identify physical problems that need correction.

Guiding Principles

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan is underlain by four guiding principles:

- Maintain existing land use patterns.
- Protect neighborhood character and sense of place.
- Strengthen neighborhood connections by restarting the Lions Park Neighborhood Association.
- Improve neighborhood infrastructure as needed and as feasible to support the existing high quality of life in Lions Park.

Maintain Existing Land Use Patterns

Commercial and residential land uses can be very compatible urban neighbors where there is community agreement on an edge beyond which residential land use is preserved. In order to maintain the overwhelmingly single-family residential character of Lions Park Neighborhood, it is important that commercial uses not be allowed to creep southward from Main Street.

Maintaining the existing single-family character of the neighborhood is also very important to preserving neighborhood character. There are currently a handful of non-conforming, multi-family residential uses in the neighborhood. This trend should not be allowed to expand beyond these current locations.

Protect Neighborhood’s Sense of Place

A defining aspect of Lions Park Neighborhood is its *sense of place*—the physical neighborhood environment that includes the park as a major organizing principle, the presence of mature trees lining the streets, relatively dense, human-scaled housing, and narrow streets with plenty of pedestrian activity (even where there are currently no sidewalks.)



Lions Park is one of the neighborhood’s important assets and a major organizing principle for the area.

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

I. Executive Summary, *continued*

Residents and City policy makers should recognize the intrinsic value of sense of place as a community asset, committing only to actions that protect and enhance it.

Strengthen Neighborhood Connections

An active neighborhood association is the cornerstone of a vibrant community with a high quality of life. Through neighborhood associations residents can work together to achieve common goals. They also get to know elected officials and city staff who help them implement neighborhood improvement plans. A neighborhood association will not only build the sense of connectedness among residents, it will also ensure that neighborhood priorities remain on the front burner for both neighbors and City officials.

Make Necessary Infrastructure Improvements

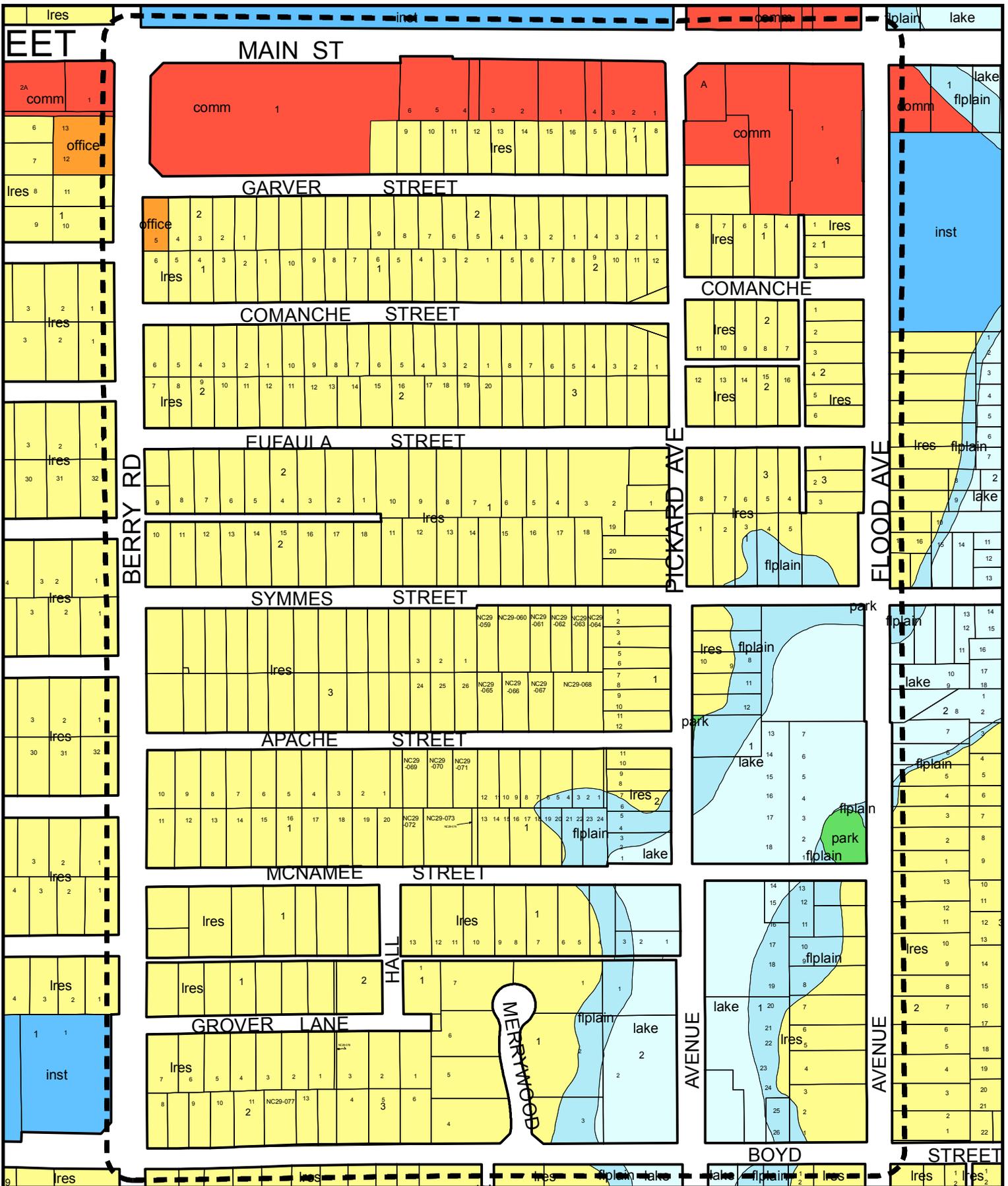
Neighborhood infrastructure is an invisible component of a high quality of life. Yet for budgetary reasons, infrastructure improvement must take an incremental approach to focus limited funds where they can do the most good for the greatest number of people. *The Lions Park Neighborhood Plan* includes specific recommendations for infrastructure improvements (see pages 22-23). Neighbors identified the following projects as top priorities:

- *Calm traffic along Symmes Street.*
- *Improve intersection of Boyd and Pickard.*
- *Install new and improve existing sidewalks along Berry, Boyd, Flood and Pickard Streets.*

Traffic calming and sidewalk installation will be accomplished fairly easily. Intersection improvements at Boyd and Pickard and possibly replacing the Boyd Street bridge will be trickier. City staff and the City Council are currently exploring design alternatives and possible federal funding sources for these improvements.

Apache Street is in the poorest condition of any street in the neighborhood. As sufficient funding can be gathered from various sources, this plan recommends that Apache be the first street on which street improvement projects are undertaken.

Other infrastructure needs identified during the planning process included curb and guttering along several streets, additional traffic calming, sidewalk installation in less critical locations, improved street lighting, and replacement of aging and undersized water lines. These projects are important but not urgent. They will be undertaken in time as resources become available and/or neighborhood need becomes more pressing.



Lions Park Neighborhood

Norman 2025 Land Use Plan



Map Produced by the City of Norman
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responsibility for errors or omissions
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Scale: 1" = 300'

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

II. What is Neighborhood Planning?

neighborhood—\nay-ber-'huud\ n. a geographically localized community located within a larger city or suburb. Residents of a given neighborhood are called neighbors.

A neighborhood is a geographic location with a 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 residents of a local community gather to 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?”

Neighborhood Planning in Norman

The *Norman 2025 Land Use and Transportation Plan*, drafted 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* also 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 literally begins with a walk around the block to assess and document physical and environmental conditions. City planners then meet with neighbors to identify social conditions and neighborhood assets. By articulating goals to protect the physical and social environment, and regulatory conditions, planners help neighbors develop a plan 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 want to work together to create real improvements in the neighborhood. By working together to identify community assets and a plan for protecting them, neighbors have direct control over their future.

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

Lions Park Planning Process *continued*



Lions Park residents discuss options for traffic calming in the neighborhood.

The *Lions Park Neighborhood Plan* is the inaugural effort in the City of Norman's Neighborhood Planning Program.

Lions Park is a central Norman neighborhood anchored by the city park of the same name. Lions Park Neighborhood was chosen to kick off the City's neighborhood planning program because of its compact size and because it has a strong sense of place and neighborhood identity.

City staff began the Lions Park planning effort with a detailed field survey of the 14-block neighborhood. This was followed by a neighborhood visioning session on June 15, 2006 to which all residents were invited. During this initial meeting held at McKinley Elementary School, participants identified neighborhood assets, liabilities, and opportunities and shared their aspirations for the neighborhood.

Neighborhood input coupled with data gathered from stakeholder interviews forms the framework of the Lions Park Neighborhood Plan. To these components, planners added targeted design explorations, infrastructure mapping, and a plan concept. Subsequent neighborhood meetings to confirm plan content were held September 27, 2006 and January 18, 2007.

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

III. Neighborhood Context



Mature trees line Lions Park streets, creating a strong sense of place and neighborhood identity.

Lions Park Neighborhood includes 14 blocks bounded on the north by Main Street; on the South by Boyd Street; on the east by Flood Street and on the west by Berry Road. The neighborhood includes around 350 homes, built mainly between 1920 and 1955.

A Sense of Place

Lions Park Neighborhood possesses a strong *sense of place* (see sidebar) with a number of features that define its identity and make the neighborhood a very desirable place to live:

- *Trees.* Lions Park Neighborhood streets are lined with mature trees. The leafy green canopy provides a comforting sense of enclosure and environmental benefits such as cooler temperatures and the absorption of carbon dioxide.
- *Human Scale.* Lions Park Neighborhood has a very human scale. Its network of houses and tree-lined streets close to neighborhood schools and shops feels very livable.
- *Close-Knit Feeling.* Lions Park Neighborhood houses have narrow front setbacks and a fairly dense building pattern. Houses are modest in size and located close to the street and to each other. This creates a close-knit, comfortable feeling between the streets and the houses.
- *Narrow Streets.* Lions Park Neighborhood streets are narrow with a human scale. Narrow streets keeps driving speeds low, which allows pedestrians and cyclists to safely share the road with vehicles.
- *Nearby Schools and Shops.* For coffee or haircuts, groceries or movie rentals, Lions Park Neighborhood residents are within easy walking distance of goods, services, and institutions that support their daily activities. There is a clear edge between commercial and residential uses.
- *Public Space.* Lions Park and the Firehouse Art Center anchor the neighborhood's identity. These are focal points for recreational, educational and social activities. The constant activity at these facilities makes them destinations and conveys a strong sense of community vitality.

What is a *Sense of Place*?

Sense of place refers to a personal response to the environment, both social and natural, which the individual experiences in daily life.

Sense of place refers to the feelings, emotions and attachments to a locality by residents or visitors.

In Lions Park, the mature trees shading neighborhood streets and the open space of the park itself work together with the close-knit rhythm of houses to create a unique sense of place.

Lions Park doesn't *look* or *feel* quite like any other neighborhood in Norman.

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

Neighborhood Context, *continued*



Trees line most of the streets of Lions Park, helping create a strong neighborhood identity.



The Firehouse Art Center, located at Flood and McNamee attracts many art students every week.

Land Use and Zoning

The neighborhood consists almost entirely of single family residential uses with R-1 zoning in place on all but two R-2 parcels. Along Main Street between Berry and Flood, there is a concentration of commercial uses which are zoned commercial (C-1 and C-2.) Lions Park is zoned Park Land (PL). A bed & breakfast, The Cutting Garden, operates in a single-family house at the NE corner of Boyd and Pickard. There are a handful of legal non-conforming residential uses (i.e. multi-family uses in a R-1 zoning category) in the neighborhood, mostly concentrated along Flood Street.

Ownership Trends

According to 2006 Cleveland County Tax Assessor data, Lions Park Neighborhood is split nearly in half between owner-occupied and non-owner occupied property. Though hard to verify other than anecdotally, it appears over the past ten years that a number of single-family houses in the neighborhood have transitioned to parent-owned, student-occupied housing, based on numbers of vehicles in driveways, out-of-state license plates, and comparisons with ownership data in the 2000 Census.

Housing Stock

Lions Park housing stock is fairly uniform in age, style, building material, size, scale, and setback, with a consistent density. Most houses in the neighborhood are between 1000—1500 sq ft. in size. There are few vacant lots in the area.

Housing conditions range from very good to poor, with concentrations of well-maintained properties throughout the neighborhood, including several houses built in the past five years. A visual analysis of housing conditions suggests that roughly 90% of the neighborhood's 356 houses are in average-to-good condition—i.e. basically sound, with minor repairs needed. The remaining 10% could be rehabilitated.

Neighborhood Infrastructure

Community Facilities. Lions Park itself is a year-round community destination as well as a neighborhood park. With recent renovations, the park is in very good condition. Multiple events attract thousands of people annually. The Firehouse Arts Center hosts hundreds of patrons and art students each week.

Schools. Lions Park is served by McKinley Elementary, Alcott Middle School, and Norman High School, all of which are within easy walking distance from the neighborhood.

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

Neighborhood Context, *continued*



The street and pedestrian bridges over Imhoff Creek are in poor to sound condition. All modes of traffic circulation at this intersection need improvement.

Streets. Street conditions throughout Lions Park are basically sound with no serious pavement failure found, though Apache is in the poorest condition and still has bar ditch drainage.

Bridges. The Boyd Street bridge over Imhoff Creek is in generally poor condition. Its low side walls have been run into many times during the bridge's lifespan. The pedestrian bridge on the north side of Boyd Street is relatively sound though it does not connect with the sidewalk network. Neither bridge makes any aesthetic contribution to this key intersection.

Sidewalks. There are partial sidewalks along Berry from Main to Symmes; along Pickard from Main to Apache; along Flood from just south of Main and then again from Symmes to Boyd, and along Garver from Berry to the eastern edge of the Homeland property. There is a paved walkway connecting Boyd Street with Grover Lane. Lions Park has a good network of sidewalks around the park.

Sanitary Sewer. The neighborhood was included in Sanitary Sewer Replacement Area in 2004-2005. All sewer work has been completed.

Water Lines. Though there are larger mains, the neighborhood is served primarily by 6" and 8" water lines. In several locations 4", 2", and 1" lines remain and need to be upgraded.

Traffic. Designed as a quiet residential road, Symmes is a continuous corridor that connects several neighborhoods, and is consequently used as a major cut-through linking Berry Road and the center of town. Fed up with this intrusion, Symmes residents requested a City traffic study of the corridor. The May 2006 study found that both speed and traffic volume problems along Symmes do indeed warrant traffic calming measures. (See page 13).

On the eastern edge of the neighborhood, property owners on the west side of Flood between Symmes and Boyd are frustrated with speeding along their street. City engineers conducted a traffic study along Flood in early 2006 but did not find justification for traffic calming intervention. (see page 15)

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

Neighborhood Context, *continued*



On-street parking is permitted in some locations throughout Lions Park.

Parking. The predominant parking pattern in Lions Park Neighborhood is off-street, in driveways. On-street parking is permitted on all east-west streets, except along Garver. Without curb and guttering in many locations, cars tend to park half in the street, half in yards. On-street parking is particularly problematic during major events at Lions Park.

Lions Park and the Firehouse have a 22-space parking lot off Flood Street and a 30-space parking lot off Pickard. In addition, there are 5 cut-back parking spaces on McNamee and 16 cut-back parking spaces along Pickard.

Lighting. Though neighbors feel strongly that Lions Park streets are dark, existing street lighting does in fact meet the minimum City standard. Most streets have one or two lights with either sodium vapor or halogen bulbs mounted on 30' poles, installed around mid-block. The dense tree canopy, which is such a neighborhood asset, makes the existing street lighting fairly ineffective.

Drainage. Berry, Boyd, Flood, Hall, Grover, McNamee, Merrywood, and Pickard have curb and guttering. Comanche, Eufaula, Garver, and Symmes have partial curb and gutter. Apache Street has bar ditches only.

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

IV. Plan Concept:

“Strengthen What We Have”



A fence along Garver Street strengthens the edge between residential and commercial land uses.



The Imhoff Creek footbridge at Boyd Street needs connection to the network of neighborhood sidewalks.

Working with neighborhood-generated assets, liabilities, and opportunities, and results from an extensive physical survey of the neighborhood, planners have developed a Neighborhood Plan Concept as a framework to implement specific improvements in Lions Park Neighborhood.

The Plan Concept below, perhaps best summarized as “Strengthen What We Have,” identifies five basic goals for Lions Park Neighborhood. On subsequent pages, each goal is articulated and accompanied by specific recommendations. If implemented, these recommended actions will preserve and protect existing Lions Park Neighborhood assets and will also be effective in correcting negative neighborhood trends.

1. Improve Pedestrian Access

Add sidewalks wherever possible to maximize walkability and to connect major roads and destinations.

2. Calm Traffic in Key Locations

Install appropriate traffic calming devices in strategic locations throughout Lions Park Neighborhood to improve safety for all modes of travel and to enhance quality of life.

3. Strengthen Edges

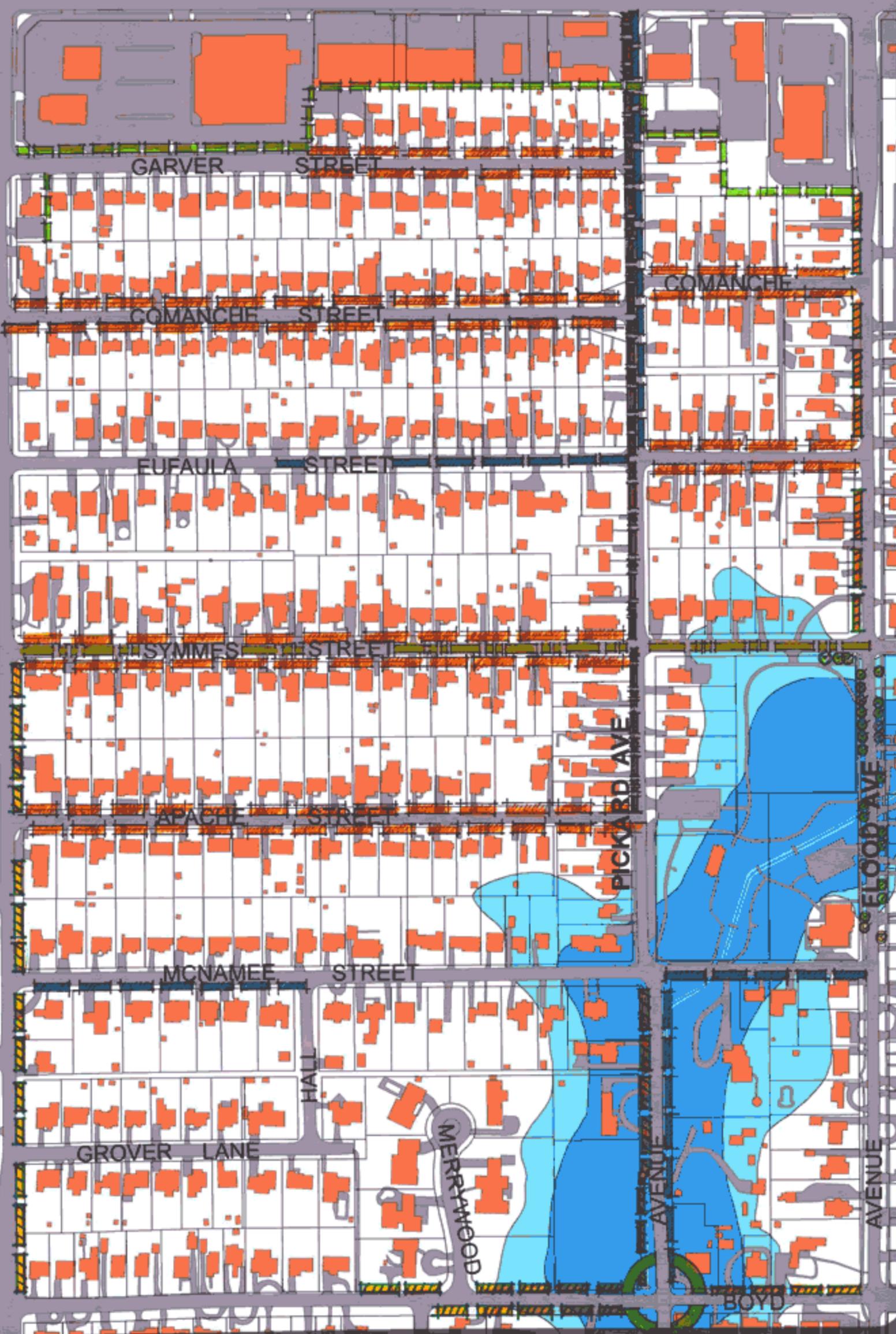
Mark clear physical boundaries separating Main Street commercial land uses from adjacent residential areas along Garver, Pickard, and Flood.

4. Improve Infrastructure

- *Increase the size of all water lines in Lions Park Neighborhood up to modern City standards.*
- *Install curb and guttering along all neighborhood streets.*
- *Ensure all neighborhood streets have adequate drainage systems.*

5. Restart the Lions Park Neighborhood Association

Reinvigorate the Lions Park Neighborhood Association as a way to improve neighborhood quality of life, promote communication, and build social capital among Lions Park neighbors.



RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS FOR LIONS PARK NEIGHBORHOOD

- | | | | |
|------------------------|--|---------------------------|--|
| CURB & GUTTER | | TRAFFIC CALMING | |
| SIDEWALK | | SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENT | |
| MAINTAIN STRONG EDGE | | TREE PLANTING | |
| WATER LINE REPLACEMENT | | INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS | |

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Lions Park Neighborhood



Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

V. Plan Concept:



The sidewalk ends at Pickard and Apache.

What is a *Walkable* Neighborhood ???

A walkable neighborhood is... a place where people live within walking distance to most places they want to visit, whether it is school, work, the grocery store, the park, a church, a bank, retail shops, a drug store, and so on.

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

In a walkable neighborhood, people choose walking or biking before they consider taking a 2,000-pound vehicle to buy a 1-pound loaf of bread!

I. Improve Pedestrian Access

Add sidewalks wherever feasible to maximize walkability and to connect major pathways and destinations.

A continuous sidewalk network is an *essential* component of neighborhood livability and is becoming increasingly mandatory as economic and community health conditions force people out of their cars.

Lions Park Neighborhood's central location near schools, parks, and shopping districts means that residents are close enough to walk or bicycle almost everywhere in Norman's Core Area. More trips on foot or by bike mean fewer cars on neighborhood streets, which is a key factor in calming traffic and enhancing neighborhood quality of life.

Existing Sidewalk Conditions

Sidewalks are scarce in Lions Park Neighborhood. Where sidewalks do exist, they are discontinuous and in spotty condition. Pedestrians, people with strollers, and anyone in a wheelchair can easily be stranded where sidewalks simply end. Wherever feasible, sidewalks should connect major paths through the neighborhood.

Sidewalk Constraints and Tradeoffs

Retrofitting sidewalks into older neighborhoods is tricky because in many cases, houses are sited close to the street. Installing sidewalks can mean a loss of parking, which is already a scarce commodity in Lions Park Neighborhood. This is the situation along Comanche, Eufaula, Symmes, and Apache Streets. Along Boyd Street from west of Merrywood to Berry, the combination of steep driveway grades and narrow setbacks will make sidewalk installation nearly impossible, though there is clearly a demonstrated need for it.

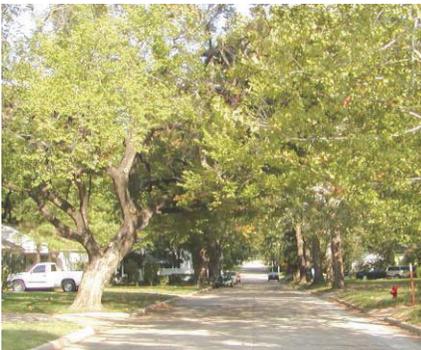
Another sidewalk constraint is presence of trees in the right-of-way. Mature trees lining the streets are sacred to Lions Park Neighborhood and *should not be removed* for the sake of installing sidewalks. Instead, sidewalk networks should be designed *around* existing trees wherever possible. It may be necessary to use alternative routings, installation techniques, and materials to protect tree root systems and preserve the health of the trees while still providing pedestrian access.

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

Improve Pedestrian Access, *continued*



Existing sidewalk along Pickard from Main to Apache. Current sidewalk conditions need improvement.



Mature trees constrain sidewalk installation but these magnificent trees are sacred to Lions Park Neighborhood and must be protected.

Sidewalk Opportunities

Boyd Street

Boyd Street is a major corridor for all modes of travel—cars, bikes, and pedestrians. Along Boyd from Flood to Berry, there is no sidewalk, though a well-worn “cow path” suggests a strong need for one. There appears to be reasonable grade and sufficient right-of-way along this segment to install a sidewalk along Boyd from Flood west past Merrywood, linking up with an existing sidewalk leading north to Grover Lane. The pedestrian bridge over Imhoff Creek will need realignment to connect this sidewalk network.

Berry Road

From Main Street, sidewalks along the east side of Berry Road currently extend only as far south as Symmes. Berry is a major north-south corridor. Sidewalk along Berry should extend south to Boyd Street, linking to the network there. There appears to be sufficient right-of-way to complete this segment.

Flood Street

Sidewalk along the west side of Flood extends from Main Street southward to the rear property line of CVS Pharmacy. The sidewalk stops here and begins again at the corner of Flood and Symmes, continuing south to Boyd.

Flood is a major north-south pedestrian route linking the park, housing, the commercial district, and Norman High School. Flood Street needs to be fully connected to the existing sidewalk network, provided that sidewalk can be located to minimize parking loss on individual properties. There appears to be sufficient right-of-way to construct this important linkage.

Garver Street

Garver provides easy access to shops and services along Main Street. There is currently sidewalk along Garver eastward from Berry Road, terminating at the Homeland parking lot. There is adequate right-of-way and flat grade along the north side of Garver east from Homeland to Pickard to continue the existing sidewalk, provided it can be located to minimize parking loss on individual properties. Garver residents could choose to restore on-street parking if the installation of sidewalk will create parking hardships. Extending the sidewalk along the north side of Garver from Homeland to Pickard has been identified as a priority among the residents of this block.

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

Improve Pedestrian Access, *continued*

Pickard Street

Pickard is a heavily trafficked north-south pedestrian corridor connecting community destinations such as McKinley Elementary School, Norman High School, the park, and the Firehouse Arts Center. At present there is continuous sidewalk on the west side of Pickard from Main to Apache, but the sidewalk abruptly ends at Apache. The existing sidewalk condition is poor in places. Major trees in the right-of-way south of Apache will make sidewalk installation infeasible for the time being. But installing sidewalk on the west side of Pickard south from McNamee to Boyd is a high priority.

Pickard Constraint

Ideally, sidewalks should be located on both sides of a major street. However, in the proposed segment of sidewalk along Pickard north of Boyd, the path will need to be routed along the west edge of Imhoff Creek under the existing tree line. This may require the purchase of a sliver of right-of-way from the adjacent property owner to the west and will likely require alternative paving materials in order to preserve the health of the existing line of trees.

If the Imhoff Creek channel is widened as is currently being discussed by Public Works, the location of the sidewalk will need to be included in any new channel design.

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

V. Plan Concept:



A concrete speed table on Norman's Vine Street is a calming device used to both slow traffic speeds and reduce volume.

What is *Traffic Calming*?

Traffic calming... Definitions of traffic calming vary but the term refers to a variety of on-road devices intended to alter motorist behavior on a street or network of streets.

Traffic calming devices are used to control traffic volume or speed with the usual result that altering one changes the other.

The primary goal behind traffic calming is to improve the safety of neighborhood streets and to enhance the quality of life for people who live, work, and play along the street and in that neighborhood.

2. Calm Traffic in Key Locations

Install a variety of appropriate traffic calming devices in strategic locations in Lions Park Neighborhood to enhance quality of life and to improve safety for all modes of travel.

Calming

Traffic calming (see caption box for definition) measures seek to reduce traffic speed and volume, improve safety, and enhance quality of life along a street. Several locations in Lions Park Neighborhood will require monitoring and appropriate calming intervention:

Symmes Street

As the only continuous east-west street through the neighborhood, Symmes has become the preferred cut-through for traffic heading to and from the center of town and the university. Cut-through traffic volumes and speeds have had a decidedly negative effect on quality of life along Symmes. Residents requested the City conduct a traffic study of the corridor.

Based on a study conducted May 2-5, 2006, City Traffic engineers determined that traffic calming intervention was warranted on Symmes between Flood and Berry. Engineers met with Symmes Street residents on October 17, 2006 to discuss calming measures. During that meeting, residents agreed that speed tables were the most appropriate mechanism to calm traffic along Symmes.

Following this meeting, neighborhood volunteers circulated a petition among Symmes Street property owners. The petition sought their support to install three speed tables along Symmes Street between Flood Avenue and Berry Road. There was overwhelming support among property owners and Symmes will be on the list for the installation of calming measures in 2007.

Garver Street

Garver Street provides well-used "back door" access to the Homeland Shopping Center at the southeast corner of Main and Berry. Residents along Garver Street have contacted the City Traffic Engineer to request a traffic study to determine whether the street meets warrants for traffic calming. The study will likely be conducted in the next twelve months.

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

Plan Concept:



Traffic at the intersection of Boyd and Pickard is influenced by traffic movement on several adjacent blocks.

Other Traffic Issues

Intersection of Boyd and Pickard

Abundant accident data strongly suggests a need for improvement here, yet this is an intersection with many components. This intersection is one component of a system that includes automotive, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic movements here and on several adjacent blocks.

Boyd and Pickard Constraints

There is little disagreement that the intersection of Boyd and Pickard needs improvement. But the intersection is highly constrained by existing physical features including the following:

- Boyd functions as an arterial road but it is also a neighborhood street.
- Boyd Street provides major east-west circulation for city-wide traffic.
- Pickard provides important north-south access, including major pedestrian and bicycle access to parks and schools.
- Busy signalized intersection one block east at Boyd and Flood means car stacking is already an issue along Boyd.
- A traditional zero lot line apartment building at southeast corner of Pickard and Boyd is in the sight triangle.
- The Boyd Pickard intersection is a gateway—a visual point of entry—into the park area and the neighborhood.

Boyd and Pickard is a Citywide Problem to Solve

Though the intersection of Boyd and Pickard does serve as a gateway to the Lions Park Neighborhood, this busy intersection also serves citywide traffic. Solutions must work both politically and physically, and must respect the delicate balance of moving parts that intersect at this corner. Boyd and Pickard needs mechanisms that both alert drivers to a tricky intersection *and* beautify the neighborhood gateway. An incremental approach to change at this intersection is *strongly recommended*.

Improvements at Boyd and Pickard should include the following design considerations:

- *Maintain Street Width.* Lions Park neighbors feel *strongly* that the two-lane character of Boyd Street is a neighborhood asset. Travel lanes along Boyd Street *should not* be widened in an attempt to improve traffic flow.

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

Calm Traffic in Key Locations, *continued*

What Is *Roadway Friction*???

Along city streets, *friction* refers to the sense drivers get from objects overhanging, alongside, or in the road.

These points of friction—e.g, overhanging trees, buildings close to the street, rough or bumpy paving textures, heavily traveled sidewalks close to the roadway, narrow or changeable street widths—these factors all make drivers subconsciously slow their driving speeds.

Without a sense of friction, drivers travel the speed they feel comfortable moving, regardless of posted speed limit. The wider the street or even the *feel* of the street, the faster traffic feels safe to move.

Friction *combined* with calming mechanisms can be very effective for speed control. A local example of this is located east of OU stadium along Jenkins between Brooks and Lindsey . There, a curvilinear roadway combined with texturized pavement and heavy pedestrian traffic are very effective at controlling speed through a busy segment of road .

- *Turning Radii.* Slightly wider turning radii at this intersection may improve traffic flow but should not exacerbate existing conditions. Wider radii at Boyd and Pickard should not be expanded to the level of “new street” standards.
- *Pedestrians and Bikes.* Sidewalks are strongly recommended to be installed along the north side of Boyd from Flood to just west of Merrywood, along the south side of Boyd from Pickard to Broad Lane, and along the west side of Pickard between Imhoff Creek and the tree line. A bicycle & pedestrian traffic study is recommended for this intersection in order to get an accurate picture of the traffic along Pickard.
- *Retain Building.* Any intersection improvement plan *should not* initially include the demolition of the apartment building at the southeast corner of Pickard and Boyd. Although the building is situated nearly on the property line and does encroach into the sight triangle, its presence visually anchors the corner.
- *New Bridges.* In order to improve drainage along Imhoff Creek, a new street bridge with a wider drainage box underneath is desirable. The new bridge should include integrated sidewalks on both north and south sides of Boyd Street. The new bridge should not have wider travel lanes for cars. The bridge should definitely make an aesthetic contribution to the streetscape.
- *Enhance Friction.* The intersection of Boyd and Pickard will always be highly constrained. Yet those constraints create the friction that allows an arterial street to also function as a neighborhood street. This hybrid street type requires slower travel speeds, planning sensitivity, and a basic understanding that standard traffic planning assumptions do not apply here.

Flood Avenue

Flood Avenue between Symmes and Boyd continues to be an area of concern to residents. Traffic speeds are the primary concern. Results of December, 2005 traffic studies along this corridor do not meet City warrants for traditional traffic calming measures. Study results did indicate that speeding along Flood is closely linked to class change times at the university.

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

Calm Traffic in Key Locations, *continued*

Flood Avenue Constraints

- Like Boyd, Flood Avenue is both a neighborhood street as well as a functional arterial.
- Flood carries a high volume of north-south citywide traffic, including heavy equipment and trucks.
- Flood has a gentle hill sloping southward which lends itself to speeding up or zooming down.

Flood Avenue Recommendations

Enhance Friction. Due to traffic volumes, speed tables are probably not appropriate along Flood Avenue but simple calming measures that increase a sense of friction could be quite effective here. To start, it is recommended that shade trees be planted in the rights-of-way along both sides of Flood Avenue, south of the intersection of Flood and Symmes. Depending on the growth rate of the species chosen, these trees will in time create sense of overhead enclosure that will help calm traffic.

Monitor Closely. It is also recommended that the Norman Police Department closely monitor speed along Flood Avenue. Neighbors should also continue to monitor the situation, staying in touch with City officials and the Norman Police Department in the event the situation worsens.

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

V. Plan Concept:



A wooden fence along Garver Street effectively screens a commercial parking lot.

3. Protect Existing Land Use

Mark clear physical boundaries separating Main Street commercial land uses from adjacent residential streets along Garver, Pickard, and Flood.

Do not allow non-conforming, multi-family land uses to spread beyond their current locations.

Lions Park Neighborhood has an overwhelmingly single family, residential composition, and the close proximity of shops and services along Main Street is a definite amenity. Commercial land uses and adjacent residential *can* be good neighbors if strongly defined edges are maintained. In addition to improving residential quality of life, a defined edge makes a clear line in the sand when zoning changes are proposed that could negatively impact a neighborhood.

Land Use Transitions

Good planning policy usually recommends that land use transitions occur at rear property lines. Front property line transitions are potentially destabilizing to land uses on the other side of the street, allowing intrusive traffic, noise, and light into a neighborhood. Many years ago, the Homeland Shopping Center was allowed to develop from Main to Garver Street, including three driveways opening onto Garver. Though the Homeland property has been responsible in erecting a fence and landscaping to screen their parking lot from houses across the street, residents on the south side of Garver have mostly just learned to live with the abrupt transition.



Alley behind the commercial uses along Main Street. Residential properties along Garver Street (on the right) have a variety of back-yard fence solutions to screen themselves from this view.

In order not to provoke further negative impacts of commercial uses on residential uses across the street, the *Lions Park Neighborhood Plan* recommends maintaining a strongly defined edge along Garver Street and across Pickard behind Main Street commercial uses over to Flood.

Garver Street

Neighbors along Garver Street have erected a variety of fence types to screen themselves from the rear of Main Street commercial properties. Because these commercial land uses have been in place for many years, building owners are not required by zoning ordinance to provide any type of screening.

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

Protect Existing Land Use *continued*

Currently, the only Main Street properties that have direct access to Garver Street are all on the western end. This should not change. If additional commercial properties are given access to Garver Street, this will begin to erode the residential character of the street, first on the north side, then on the south. It is strongly recommended that this plan establish a definitive edge to protect current residential land use and zoning.

Rear Yard Paving Along Garver.

Two properties along Garver immediately east of Homeland have rear yards that are completely paved, making them less attractive as residential property and vulnerable to commercial encroachment. Both are currently zoned R-1. Paving restrictions in place now would not allow this kind of over paving in the future, but neighbors should be alert to the possibility of rezoning requests in this location.

Pickard Avenue

Main Street commercial uses have crept southward several parcels along Pickard. Blockbuster Video, which fronts on Main, has an access drive off Pickard separated by a six-foot wooden fence screening the adjacent houses to the south. The driveway cuts through a vacant lot and neighbors should be alert to proposed changes here that may seek to intensify the commercial presence along Pickard.

Flood Avenue

The CVS store at the southwest corner of Main and Flood has a mandatory six-foot wooden fence in place, screening this commercial use from its residential neighbor to the south. The property south of the CVS fence is a historic single-family house which has been converted to multi-family use, though it is zoned for single-family residential use.

This edge behind CVS is the eastern terminus that separates Lions Park residential uses from Main Street commercial uses. This edge must remain strong to prevent further commercial encroachment along Flood Street into the neighborhood.

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

Protect Existing Land Use *continued*

Limit Non-Conforming Uses Throughout

An important technique of neighborhood preservation is the protection of existing land use. Lions Park's neighborhood character is predominantly single family residential. This character is the rhythm of the neighborhood and is a valuable asset that requires protection.

At present, there are a handful of non-conforming multi-family uses. They have been in place a long time. Most are well-maintained, several are not. Neighbors should be alert to either illegal conversions of single-family houses to multi-family use or requests for rezoning from single to multi-family.

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

V. Plan Concept:



Curb and guttering makes a clear edge between public space and private space and improves drainage in some areas.

4. Improve Infrastructure

Solid infrastructure—quality roads, sidewalks, adequate water, sewer and storm water capacity, curbs and guttering, and good lighting—all form the skeletal system of a healthy neighborhood. Lions Park residents placed a high priority on improving circulation and agreed that the following projects were very important to the neighborhood:

- *Calm traffic along Symmes Street.*
- *Improve intersection of Boyd and Pickard*
- *Install new and improve existing sidewalks along Berry, Boyd and Pickard.*

Not surprising given the neighborhood's age, Lions Park Neighborhood has several undersized and aging water lines. In several cases, these lines are not very accessible because of their location. Though these undersized lines will need to be replaced in time, the City's Utility Department indicates that they serve few houses and are still quite functional. The neighborhood can focus on more immediate above-ground needs in the near term, working on line replacement when the need becomes critical.

Traffic Calming. The installation of speed platforms along Symmes between Flood Avenue and Berry Road is funded and scheduled for installation in the fiscal year ending (FYE) 2008.

Boyd & Pickard Intersection Improvements. Accident rates here indicate a definite need for improvement but an incremental approach to change will yield the best results. For now, sidewalk installation along the north side of Boyd from Flood to past Merrywood will improve sight lines, particularly on the north. This pedestrian presence will also help calm traffic to some degree.

New Sidewalks with Handicap Ramp Installation. As listed above, residents say that new and improved sidewalks are a high priority. New sidewalks must include handicap ramps, and handicap ramps need to be retrofitted along Pickard and Berry. Due to pedestrian traffic levels and construction feasibility, Berry, Boyd, Flood and Pickard are priority projects. Sidewalk projects below could be undertaken in the future, depending on funding, feasibility, and neighborhood priority.

- Berry: east side from Symmes to Boyd
- Boyd: north side from Flood to just past Merrywood
- Flood: west side from CVS to Symmes
- Garver: north side from Homeland Center to Pickard
- Pickard: west side from Boyd to McNamee

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

V. Plan Concept: *continued*

Sidewalk Replacement and Handicap Ramp Installation

- Pickard: scattered sites along west side from Apache to Main Street.

Street Surfacing. It is critical that street widths remain narrow when they are repaved. Apache, Symmes, and Comanche between Pickard and Berry are scheduled for urban asphalt pavement replacement in the 2010 bond allocation. If it becomes feasible to fund a larger-scale Apache project by 2010, we propose that 2010 bond resources be bundled with other City resources in order to do a drainage, repaving, and curb and guttering project on Apache all at one time.

Sanitary Sewer. Lions Park was included in Sanitary Sewer replacement project in 2005. All replacement work has been completed.

Lighting. Though lights in Lions Park meet the City's *minimum standard* for residential street lighting, residents complain that neighborhood streets are dark. During the planning process, neighbors expressed strong support for improved lighting. Currently, the best option to improve lighting is for neighbors to establish a cost sharing lighting district through which residents would share the costs of purchase, installation, and operation of additional lighting where it is desired.

Water Line Replacement. As one of the oldest neighborhoods in the Core Area, Lions Park still has a few inadequately sized water lines that eventually need to be replaced. As they become dysfunctional, replace water lines to modern City standards in the following locations.

- Pickard from Main to Symmes—replace 4" line
- Pickard from McNamee to Boyd—replace 2" line
- McNamee from Pickard to Flood—replace 1" line
- Eufaula from Pickard to 700' west—replace 4" line
- McNamee from Berry to Hall—replace 4" line

Curb & Gutter with Street Lowering and Repaving. Based on need and cost of construction, it is recommended this project begin on Apache and the remaining uncurbed block of Eufaula between Pickard and Flood. Curb and guttering is also missing in other locations and should be considered as it becomes feasible to fund:

- Apache: from Pickard to Berry
- Symmes: from Pickard to Berry

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

V. Plan Concept:

What is Social Capital?
Social Capital term refers to an attitude, spirit, and willingness of people to engage in collective civic activities. This forms a network of relationships that together with behavior norms, trust and cooperation, enables a community, or neighborhood, to function effectively.

5. Restart Lions Park Neighborhood Association

An active neighborhood association is a cornerstone of a vibrant community with a high quality of life. Neighborhood Associations allow people to take ownership of their part of the City. Through these associations, neighbors connect with and learn to trust each other. They work together to achieve common goals. They also get to know elected officials and city staff who help them implement neighborhood improvement plans.

Many years ago Lions Park had an active neighborhood association. It is strongly recommended that neighbors restart the Lions Park Neighborhood Association as a way to build social capital among residents.

The neighborhood association should consider organizing social activities, be a communication tool for the neighborhood, and be the “keeper of the neighborhood plan.” By undertaking these activities, the neighborhood association can keep a finger on the pulse on changing neighborhood priorities and be a catalyst to ensure that plan recommendations are implemented.

Lions Park Neighborhood Plan

VI. Implementation Plan

Planning to Stay

By William R. Morish and
Catherine R. Brown © 1994

.....On Neighborhoods

“A neighborhood is a complex system....It’s tempting to start planning with a clean sheet of paper and its logical extension, the empty block.

But in reality, each neighborhood is a messy amalgam of the natural and the built, the moving and the fixed, the evolving and the permanent. Moreover, the intricate layers and shifting networks are the foundation for a vital, interesting community....”

The guiding principle of the *Lions Park Neighborhood Plan* is to strengthen social and physical neighborhood assets. The Plan recommends the following:

- Amend the *Norman 2025 Land Use and Transportation Plan* to include the *Lions Park Neighborhood Plan* and to redesignate Lots 1-3, Block 1, McNamee Addition from commercial to low density residential land use.
- Maintain existing land use patterns.
- Protect neighborhood character and the neighborhood’s highly developed sense of place.
- Strengthen neighborhood connections by restarting the Lions Park Neighborhood Association.
- Improve neighborhood infrastructure as needed and as resources are available to support the existing quality of life.

Maintain Existing Land Use Patterns

To preserve the character of Lions Park, it is vitally important that commercial uses not be allowed to creep southward from Main Street. Neighborhood residents and City policy makers should establish a clear line separating Main Street commercial uses from adjacent residential uses.

Maintaining the existing single-family character of the neighborhood is vital to preserving neighborhood character. The current handful of non-conforming multi-family uses should not be allowed to expand beyond current locations.

Protect Neighborhood Sense of Place

Residents and City policy makers must recognize the intrinsic value of sense of place (see page 8) as a vital community asset, committing *only* to actions that protect and enhance it.

Neighbors Must Play a Role

Neighbors must play a starring role in preserving and protecting their neighborhood. Two of the most effective ways they can do this are to immediately revive the Lions Park Neighborhood Association and stay in close contact with their City Council representative. A neighborhood association will build the sense of connectedness among residents and will ensure that neighborhood priorities remain on the City’s front burner .

Improve Neighborhood Infrastructure

Neighborhood infrastructure improvements should be prioritized by evaluating which projects provide the greatest community benefit *and* which ones are most achievable. (See Appendix for detailed description of infrastructure project scopes and cost estimates.)

LIONS PARK IDENTIFIED INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

Street & Drainage Projects

Apache: Berry to Pickard (1250 LF)± curb & gutter, storm sewer inlets, paving & drive approaches	\$ 290,000.00
Symmes: Berry to Pickard (1250 LF) ± curb & gutter, storm sewer inlets, paving & drive approaches	\$ 331,000.00
Comanche: Berry to Pickard (1250 LF) ± curb & gutter only	\$ 80,000.00
Eufaula: Pickard to Flood (450 LF) curb & gutter, storm sewer inlets, paving & drive approaches	\$ 111,000.00
Comanche: Pickard to Flood (450 LF) curb & gutter, storm sewer inlets, paving & drive approaches	\$ 105,000.00
Garver: Berry to Pickard (1250 LF) curb & gutter and paving	<u>\$ 230,000.00</u>
	\$ 1,147,000.00

Scheduled Bond Issue Projects

Apache: Berry to Pickard deep mill overlay ±	FYE 2010	\$ 47,238.00
Symmes: Berry to Pickard deep mill overlay ±	FYE 2010	\$ 48,484.00
Comanche: Berry to Pickard deep mill overlay ±	FYE 2010	<u>\$ 53,015.00</u>
		\$ 148,737.00

± The costs of surfacing and drainage projects do not take into account the mill overlay bond issue projects noted below. If feasible especially on Apache, the resources and timing of street and drainage improvement should utilize the funds from the bond issue to reduce deuplication, waste, and costs on the larger scale project.

Sidewalk Projects

Replacement Sidewalks and Handicap Ramp Installation

Pickard: West side from McNamee to Apache (5' wide)	\$ 18,500.00
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New Sidewalks and Handicap Ramps

Berry: East side from Symmes to Boyd (1300 LF)	\$ 71,500.00
Boyd: North side from Flood to Pickard	\$ 16,500.00
Boyd: North side from Pickard to West of Merrywood *	\$ 25,000.00
*May be included in Boyd Street bridge replacement project	
Flood: West side from CVS to Symmes (1000 LF)	\$ 49,500.00
*Pickard: West side from Boyd to McNamee (625 LF)	\$ 36,500.00
*includes 240 LF of aesthetically pleasing fence parallel to drainage channel	
Garver: North side from Homeland Center to Pickard (650 LF)	<u>\$ 48,000.00</u>
	\$ 247,000.00

Tree Planting

6 - 2" caliper trees on West side of Flood: McNamee to Symmes	\$ 1,658.00
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LIONS PARK IDENTIFIED INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

Page 2

Water Line Replacement Projects

McNamee: Pickard to Flood (6" line replacing 1" line)	\$	35,795.00
Pickard: McNamee to Boyd (8" line replacing 2" line)	\$	42,275.00
McNamee: Berry to Hall (6" line replacing 4" line)	\$	47,257.00
Eufaula: Pickard west 700' (6" line replacing 4" line)	\$	52,424.00
Pickard: Main to Symmes (8" line replacing 4" line)	\$	<u>107,225.00</u>
	\$	284,976.00

Boyd/Pickard Intersection Bridge Replacement Project	\$	908,800.00
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Traffic Calming

Symmes: Pickard to Berry (scheduled for FYE 08)	\$	13,000.00
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Notes on Infrastructure Cost Estimates:

- All cost included on the list are 2007 prices and include engineering fees and contracted construction.
- Only three areas in this list are currently scheduled and funded: the mill overlay bond issue projects, traffic calming on Symmes, and partial tree planting along Flood Avenue. In addition, the replacement of the Boyd Street bridge at Pickard has been proposed as a joint Capital/STP UZA funded project.
- Other potential resources are from existing sidewalk programs, proposed core neighborhood funds in the CIP, water fund, and other capital resources.

Lions Park Infrastructure Projects Recommended in Priority Order:

Traffic Calming

Symmes between Flood and Berry: speed platforms are funded for FYE 2008.

Sidewalk Projects

1. Pickard: Replacement sidewalk and handicapped ramp installation from Apache to Main
2. Berry: New sidewalk and handicapped ramp installation from Boyd to Symmes
3. Boyd: New sidewalk and handicapped ramp installation from Flood to Pickard
4. Flood: New sidewalk and handicapped ramp installation in gap between CVS Pharmacy and Symmes

Tree Planting

Flood between Symmes and Firehouse: tree planting in ROW is funded with FYE 08 resources.

Street Improvements

Apache between Pickard and Berry was the highest priority street project. A variety of City resources could be used to fund the project.