



# Nacogdoches Comprehensive Plan Update

## Housing and Neighborhoods

### CHAPTER 8

Residents credit the scenic, small town atmosphere of the community as one of the primary benefits of living in Nacogdoches. That atmosphere is reflected in many of the neighborhoods found throughout the community. In most places, trees have been maintained or grown once again in a way that makes even urban neighborhoods appear as rural hamlets. Interestingly, many of the neighborhoods also function similarly to hamlets – separate, serene and disconnected – but without the inclusive amenities.

Housing in Nacogdoches is an intriguing mix of age, type, cost, material and condition. Housing needs and issues in the community are a reflection of that diversity, as well as the substantial influences posed by the presence of Stephen F. Austin University and significant medical facilities. Nacogdoches is a community that is relatively affordable, yet needs affordable housing. During the majority of each year, it is the adopted home of a large number of college students with specific needs and impacts. It is an aging city that is looking to attract the aging. Nacogdoches is a community with fantastic scenic opportunities within close proximity to all major amenities, yet it is faced with – and promotes – sprawl.

Many of the issues faced by Nacogdoches are not unique. Issues such as student housing, manufactured housing, and sprawl are topics of debate in many communities around the country. On the other hand, few communities have the potential to create the housing environment that is available to Nacogdoches – or the residents and organizations with the desire and pride in their community to address each issue.

## Key Issues

Analysis and observation of current conditions and trends, previous plans and studies, coupled with strong input by various community leaders, residents, elected officials, SFA students, and business owners has resulted in establishing six major issues related to housing and neighborhoods. Each issue is generally discussed as a means of determining broad goals, specific objectives and clear action statements that will become the basis for future housing policy for the community.

- ◆ **Maintaining Affordability** – Generally, Nacogdoches residents consider their community to be a fairly affordable place in which to live. Land is abundant, both within and outside of “the loop.” Housing costs are impacted by speculative land value, overheated demand, or special construction costs. Vacant homes are relatively available, indicating that the market is not facing an immediate shortage. New housing is being developed.

Yet, many Nacogdoches residents indicate a need for affordable housing. The issue is so prominent that the Mayor established a task force to address the issue and provide working material for the Comprehensive Plan Update. To some, it may seem odd that a community that is considered affordable and that offers no strong indicators of a housing shortage or scarcity of resources should indicate that affordability is a significant issue.

The reason is that affordability is not the only issue involved. Housing may be affordable, but as noted by the Affordable Housing Task Force, many residents live in “unsafe and substandard housing.” The need in Nacogdoches is *quality* affordable housing.

At the same time, some residents question the continued emphasis on “low income” housing. Concerns include the need to consider affordable housing in the overall plan, such as provision of adequate services, appropriate location, and proliferation of large-scale, low-income apartments.



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- ◆ **Embracing Student Housing** – As a “town and gown” community, the City of Nacogdoches must deal with the many unique needs and impacts that are associated with student housing. Students require proximity to the college or university, unless they have access to an automobile – as in the case of Nacogdoches. Student housing is seasonal and temporary because the majority of students will likely depart the community upon graduation. As a result, the vast majority of students rent homes and apartments.

Neighborhoods throughout Nacogdoches often raise both real and perceived concerns about student housing such as overcrowding, added congestion, hours of activity, general mischief, lack of concern for neighbors or property values, and lack of home maintenance. Residents are often concerned about the impact that student housing will have on surrounding property values and overall quality of life.

While the student population increases housing demand, particularly for rental units, it also enhances the argument for affordable housing. Few students attending Stephen F. Austin University have the capacity to afford high monthly payments or rent. As a result, students have a tendency to either occupy an extensive amount of the available, affordable housing stock or cover a higher cost of housing by adding roommates and creating an overcrowded environment.



- ◆ **Retiring to Home** – Many communities across the country have begun a campaign to establish a retirement atmosphere and capture the increasing market created by aging Baby Boomers. Nacogdoches offers a number of resources which may allow it to become a future haven for retirees. Stephen F. Austin State University provides access to culture and education while allowing residents to enjoy a relatively low cost of living; a natural, “small town” environment; quality medical facilities; proximity to major municipalities; and, historical context.

On the other hand, the majority of neighborhoods in Nacogdoches are not conducive to walking, nor do they offer connectivity to major destinations.

Likewise, most subdivisions within Nacogdoches do not offer the necessary amenities to cater to the retirement community, such as nearby shopping, community facilities, sidewalks, street furniture, or parks. New housing, including more recent assisted living facilities, are being developed away from downtown and other amenities, as well as in low densities.

- ◆ **Making Manufactured Housing Compatible** – Manufactured housing continues to be one of the most affordable means of entering into homeownership. It is particularly appealing when other new homes under construction appear out of reach. Unfortunately, manufactured housing has always carried a negative stigma for a variety of reasons. The appearance and quality of the typical “mobile home” has created a housing stock considered to be cheap, and temporary. Unlike, “stick-built” homes, mobile homes, and many of the types of newer, manufactured housing, have historically depreciated in value. To reduce negative impacts, mobile homes have largely been relegated to private mobile home parks or rural areas.

Residents of Nacogdoches have serious issues with the possibility of integration of manufactured housing into the community, largely based upon concerns for the potential impact on area property values. However, they also realize that manufactured housing is an affordable and necessary alternative.

Simply put, manufactured housing is expected to be “the lowest alternative” for homeownership. However, the manufactured housing industry has the capacity to develop manufactured homes that can meet or even exceed the expectations for “stick-built” homes. By requiring manufactured housing to meet appearance, quality, and permanence requirements expected of all single family detached units, Nacogdoches will have an affordable means of developing quality housing. Meeting such requirements may increase the cost of the manufactured home, but it will remain a more affordable option.

- ◆ **Creating and Keeping Neighborhoods** – Creating and maintaining quality neighborhoods begins by design and continues through enhancement, appreciation and diligence. The City of Nacogdoches is home to many attractive neighborhoods and subdivisions that cross the spectrum of cost, style, age, size, and location. Yet, while the community offers a strong housing stock, many neighborhoods lack some of the necessary ingredients to maximize potential and quality of life. Successful and dynamic neighborhoods share a number of key traits, including a pedestrian friendly environment, neighborhood focal points, access to services without the need to travel by automobile (although the option is certainly available), mixed housing, distinguishable community character, narrow residential streets, and community-oriented architecture. Interestingly, new subdivisions appear to only be concerned with the provision of housing, rather than the sense of environment and character available in many older neighborhoods.

Many of the area’s neighborhoods have been well maintained, while others require revitalization and repair. Comments by Nacogdoches residents at public meetings indicate concerns about the upkeep and appearance of the housing stock, encroachment of potentially undesirable uses, and deterioration of quality of life in area neighborhoods. This is a significant issue because of the impact that appearance and condition can have on

the surrounding area. Housing that appears to need upkeep, is overcrowded by an excessive number of cars, lacks maintenance, or is simply out of character with the surroundings can be an indication of a neighborhood in a state of disrepair and decline. On the other hand, freshly painted and well-maintained homes are indicative of a positive neighborhood with a promising future. Appearance is also correlated to community pride and ownership, perception, area property value, maintenance costs, and quality of life.

Some residents have suggested the need for additional ordinances and better enforcement of existing requirements. Others emphasized the need to improve basic cleanliness and property maintenance.



- ◆ **Developing Housing Sensibly** – While Nacogdoches is witnessing significant housing growth, the vast majority of development appears to be taking place outside of the Loop. Oddly, this is occurring while significant developable land is available within closer proximity to services, downtown and SFA. This development pattern is certain to impact construction cost, maintenance cost, and the ability to provide public amenities, access to services, transportation options, overall quality of life and sense of community. While many may argue that these subdivisions offer increased personal quality of life, they come with significant social, physical and economic costs to all Nacogdoches taxpayers. Additionally, the value of property is based only upon cutting-edge quality, the appearance of the housing stock and the picturesque surrounding rural area – which is not a part of the subdivision and subject to future development.

Additionally, new development appears to ignore many of the more substantial opportunities offered by the natural environment of Nacogdoches. By simply adding creativity and conscientious design to development, neighborhoods may more appropriately address issues such as slopes, woodlands, rural farmland, and attractive viewsheds.

## Goals, Objectives and Actions

Goals, objectives and actions that address housing and neighborhoods represent an effort by the general public, as directed through the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) to deal with the various issues facing the community. Goals are designed to specifically address housing and neighborhoods, but also complement efforts to address other topics, such as land use, the local environment, transportation, community facilities, historic preservation, and infrastructure.

### *Maintaining Affordability*

**Goal:** A variety of quality housing options that are appropriately available to new and current residents of Nacogdoches and affordable at all income levels.

#### Objectives

- ◆ Implement and promote a variety of forms of affordable housing in appropriate locations throughout Nacogdoches.
- ◆ Establish strategic partnerships with existing housing related organizations and promote development of new entities as necessary to further create affordable housing opportunities.
- ◆ Seek a variety of funding sources to promote affordable housing.
- ◆ Utilize new and existing programs to make housing affordable to households earning less than the median area household income.
- ◆ Reduce any local barriers to development of affordable housing.
- ◆ Utilize sound, alternative development practices as means of achieving affordability and quality.

#### Actions

- Ensure that affordable apartment complexes are located within proximity to necessary services such as transit service, parks, libraries, schools and other amenities as needed.
- Consider incorporating townhomes, duplexes, modular housing and garden homes as part of various residential development projects to diversify the housing stock and inject affordable units into the market.
- Promote alternative site design to achieve affordable housing, including zero-lot line development, reduced setbacks, reduced street widths, reduced lot size, mixed use development, cluster housing, and increased density.
- Coordinate with organizations capable of becoming involved in development of affordable housing, including church organizations, Habitat for Humanity and other nonprofit institutions.
- Enhance opportunities available through the Nacogdoches Housing Authority and established nonprofits such as the Pineywoods HOME Team for site acquisition, new construction, and redevelopment.
- Establish and maintain relationships with area builders and financial institutions to determine interest in assisting in development of affordable housing through programs that allow builders to share responsibility for creation of affordable housing and financial institutions to establish a revolving loan fund for pre-construction loans to area builders in development of affordable housing.



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- Aid in application for funding sources from the Department of Housing and Urban Development that serve specific households that historically require affordable housing, such as the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- Coordinate with local financial institutions to establish a down payment and closing cost assistance program for households in need.
- Develop a grant program for "self-help" rehabilitation of substandard housing utilizing private resources such as financial institutions and foundation funds.
- Closely examine local regulations and the approval process to determine if either contributes substantial cost to housing projects.
- Establish an education and awareness program designed to inform persons with limited income about the various affordable housing options available throughout Nacogdoches, as well as standard processes to consider when owning a home such as timely mortgage payments and general home maintenance.
- Assist in creation of various Community Development Corporations (CDCs) that, as nonprofit organizations, can implement neighborhood revitalization projects and programs. Consider the necessity of developing specialized CDCs such as a Community Housing Development Organization (as the Pineywoods HOME Team has done) to best address housing issues.

## *Embracing Student Housing*

**Goal:** A setting in which housing is appropriate to the needs of students and also sensitive to impacts upon surrounding neighborhoods.

### Objectives

- ◆ Enhance relationship with Stephen F. Austin State University in regards to housing policies and plans.
- ◆ Seek out and take advantage of housing opportunities for students appropriate to their unique needs, demands and desires.
- ◆ Ensure that student housing is promoted within logical locations that promote immediate access to services and facilities without the need for an automobile.
- ◆ Promote student use of off-campus housing, but in a manner that maintains or enhances the integrity, character and values of the surrounding neighborhood.

### Actions

- Develop a student housing plan, in coordination with Stephen F. Austin State University, that addresses the need for increased on and off-campus housing, including changes in policy, coordination with development, shared goals, specific and benchmarked actions.
- Consider adding the concept of "rooming house" as a land use that can be permitted only within certain districts.
- Develop off-campus student "villages" in coordination between local developers, SFA, and the City of Nacogdoches designed specifically for student needs and desires, but to also positively impact surrounding areas.

- Consider residential parking permits in designated areas as a means of reducing the number of automobiles permitted in low density, residential areas.

### ***Retiring to Home***

**Goal:** Housing and neighborhood design that successfully addresses the needs of an aging population while taking advantage of amenities attractive to retirees.

#### Objectives

- ◆ Promote availability of a variety of housing opportunities fitting to a diverse retirement population.
- ◆ Develop in proximity to services and facilities needed or actively utilized by seniors.
- ◆ Promote accessibility and design of housing and facilities that are sensitive to the needs of a variety of categories of seniors, including the frail elderly and the disabled.
- ◆ Utilize proximity to medical facilities, Stephen F. Austin, history of Nacogdoches, and natural setting as themes for marketing and developing senior housing and neighborhoods.

#### Actions

- Place senior housing opportunities within access of cultural opportunities and amenities such as downtown and major parks.
- Utilize many of the concepts promoted in neotraditional design in senior communities, such as incorporation of ample greenspace, trails, reduced street width, access to facilities and services (particularly by walking), sidewalks, and reduced setbacks.
- Create “live/work” programs for retirees seeking to actively utilize professional skills.
- Consider use of concepts such as cluster housing and zero-lot line development to improve appropriateness of design for seniors.
- Review existing ordinances and regulations to determine if barriers exist to development of subdivisions in a manner appropriate to the needs of seniors.
- Incorporate senior facilities, such as assisted living facilities, into neighborhood design, including placement of amenities, required materials/design, parking, lighting, and signage.

### ***Making Manufactured Housing Compatible***

**Goal:** Recognition of manufactured housing as a viable and affordable housing option that is acceptable upon meeting requirements regarding appropriate location, appearance, function and quality.

#### Objectives

- ◆ Maintain standards for manufactured housing that are similar to those for other housing types, including site standards and design guidelines.
- ◆ Promote additional affordable housing options to ensure that manufactured housing is not the only quality affordable homeownership opportunity in and around Nacogdoches.





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- ◆ Encourage strategic placement of manufactured housing communities throughout Nacogdoches based on appropriate zoning, location criteria, and development standards.
- ◆ Encourage revitalization and increase standards for existing manufactured housing and mobile home communities.
- ◆ Educate the general public regarding the need for manufactured housing and dispel myths that create a negative image of manufactured housing communities.

## Actions

- Require manufactured housing considered for placement in residential areas to meet design requirements standard for infill development regarding roof pitch, exterior materials, setbacks, proportion of structure (length, width and height), composition and location of front entry, site standards and other variables as a means of providing continuity in the neighborhood.
- Develop site design standards for manufactured housing communities that are similar in nature to subdivision requirements, including street and sidewalk requirements, setbacks, "lot" configuration, minimum yards, landscaping, parking, and other variables.
- Encourage development of manufactured housing communities as Planned Unit Developments with the option to encourage innovation in affordability and good site design that does not impede quality development.
- Require amenities for manufactured housing communities similar to those required of standard subdivisions, including parks, recreation areas, open spaces, and trails/sidewalks, community centers, and possibly schools, fire service and other variables.
- Encourage development of additional affordable housing options to provide alternatives outside of manufactured housing.
- Promote modular housing as a quality option that is more cost effective than Single Family Detached development, but does not necessarily suffer quality.
- Discourage aggregation and placement of all manufactured housing communities in a few limited locations.
- Permit development of manufactured housing communities in all districts in which standard subdivisions are permitted, *if community design requirements are met*.
- Consider limiting proliferation of manufactured housing communities through an annual cap on the number of units approved annually or the number of permits to be issued.
- Develop a manufactured housing community-to-standard program that offers incentives to community owners for improvement of existing communities including reduced rate financing, public provision of infrastructure and a streamlined approval process.
- Coordinate with local lenders and manufactured housing builders/retailers to develop a home "upgrade" option that allows for purchase/trade-in of new manufactured housing to replace an existing mobile home or otherwise substandard manufactured home.
- Coordinate with manufactured housing associations to create materials dispelling myths and perceptions regarding this housing option.

### *Creating and Keeping Neighborhoods*

**Goal:** An attractive, quality housing stock within dynamic, well-maintained neighborhoods that promote Nacogdoches as a community with character and pride.

**Goal:** Neighborhoods that are protected through diligent enforcement and development of appropriate ordinances, regulations and incentives.

#### Objectives

- ◆ Ensure that quality neighborhoods are free of vacant lots, unsafe structures, and other potential health and safety risks.
- ◆ Promote strong and active neighborhood associations as a resource and an instrument for neighborhood revitalization.
- ◆ Encourage a variety of neighborhood protection and revitalization programs managed by neighborhood organizations, private organizations or local government.
- ◆ Protect neighborhood character and condition through enforcement and improvement of relevant codes and ordinances.



- ◆ Maintain interconnection paths and visual corridors between neighborhoods and other destinations.
- ◆ Ensure that sufficient amenities are available within proximity of residential development.
- ◆ Respect and promote the urban hamlet character of many Nacogdoches neighborhoods as a model for residential development.
- ◆ Ensure design consistency in neighborhood development to maintain a sense of continuity.

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- ◆ Enforce restrictions and regulations that protect property values, local quality of life as well as general health, welfare and safety.
- ◆ Develop policies that promote rehabilitation of existing structures and infill development in a manner that complements and enhances the surrounding residential area.
- ◆ New and existing residential development should be diverse and “walkable” including a variety of experiences that are accessible within ten minutes of home without an automobile.
- ◆ Incorporate a mix of uses into neighborhood design to provide a series of destinations and to add dynamic content to residential development.
- ◆ Ensure that adequate, affordable, quality housing is available for all ages and types of households, and promote the inclusion of a variety of housing types within new and existing residential development.
- ◆ Ensure that neighborhoods are identifiable through a strong focus and well-defined edges and adequately protected from negative impacts.



## Actions

- Promote incorporation of deed restrictions or covenants into established neighborhoods along with development of a homeowners association with the capacity of enforcement.
- Consider a “covenant campaign” in which residents of a neighborhood seeking added restrictions convince neighbors to voluntarily agree to restrictions.
- Develop a voluntary “neighborhood conservation” overlay district designed to place additional maintenance, character, use, and appearance restrictions upon properties within the district.
- Consider development of taxable districts to correlate with neighborhood conservation districts in order to cover added costs for inspection and enforcement that would otherwise be borne by all taxpayers in Nacogdoches.

- Discuss the concept of annual rental registration requirement for all housing structures that will at least partially be available for lease. Registration may require an inspection of facilities prior to issuance of a permit.
- Examine and revise local health and building codes, as needed, to ensure that a streamlined process is in place to address unsafe or dilapidated structures and other potential health and safety risks, such as weeds, tires and heavy trash.
- Streamline the permit approval processes for builders and organizations that utilize existing vacant lots in a manner that complements and improves the neighborhood.
- Consider alternative uses for area vacant lots, such as creation of a neighborhood park or a neighborhood commercial establishment in strategically appropriate areas.
- Engage participation in neighborhood improvement and revitalization efforts from entities such as churches, civic organizations, schools, and businesses through programs such as neighborhood clean-up, home improvement, and beautification.
- Seek out resources from community revitalization organizations and foundations such as the Rural Local Initiatives Support Corporation (Rural LISC).
- Enhance zoning, subdivision and/or building regulations to ensure response to the special site design needs of infill housing and rehabilitation.
- Establish programs that local organizations can assist with that will improve the quality of life in neighborhoods, such as Crime Watch, neighborhood clean-up, assistance with code enforcement, programs for seniors and youth, and maintenance of public spaces and recreation areas.
- Examine code enforcement processes and regulations to ensure that enforcement is fair, expedient and utilized.



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- Develop a neighborhood-based Capital Improvements Plan that corresponds to area needs, the community-wide CIP, ability to obtain funding through the budget or other resources, and, if available, neighborhood plans.
- Incorporate sidewalks into all urban neighborhoods and repair those that impede pedestrian access.
- When possible, utilize natural areas, such as flood-prone areas, abandoned railways or other means to continue to establish a system of trails, streets and sidewalks that prevent neighborhoods from becoming isolated.
- Establish design guidelines that address issues such as materials, roof pitch, façade treatment, porches (if applicable), proportional dimensions, garage, and other elements necessary to ensure that new development and rehabilitation is consistent with the character of the area.
- Assist neighborhood organizations in development of deed restrictions and provide the training and support necessary for private enforcement.
- Educate homeowners, apartment owners and other interested parties in the importance of home maintenance and its impact upon community quality of life, as well as property value.



- Strategically mix uses, including limited neighborhood commercial development as well as major focal points such as schools, churches, parks, open spaces, day care, post office, and emergency service, and allow for each to be interconnected by pedestrian-friendly corridors.
- Consider increasing residential density as a means to preserve unique physical or cultural characteristics of an area, create green space, improve infrastructure efficiency, and increase housing affordability.
- Utilize Planned Unit Development provisions to encourage innovative and imaginative site design that minimizes adverse impacts on adjacent properties.

- Permit secondary dwellings with appropriate restrictions such as above-garage apartments and "granny flats" in all residential zoning districts by right to improve diversity, affordability and efficiency of area neighborhoods.
- Consider the pedestrian experience at the same level or higher than that provided to automobile traffic.
- Incorporate bus service into each neighborhood as a resource for travel between major destinations throughout Nacogdoches.
- Encourage gateways into the various residential areas and edges that are obvious, but do not inhibit interaction.
- Require parks, schools, churches, neighborhood centers, or other options as means of creating a community focal point. Consider appropriate zoning for these public and institutional uses.
- Residential areas should be appropriately buffered and screened from primary streets and adjacent commercial, office and community facility uses. Residential areas should not be next to industrial areas.
- Neighborhood retail and service uses should be located at intersections of arterial or collector streets or at the edge of logical neighborhood areas unless appropriately placed within a planned development.

### *Developing Housing Sensibly*

**Goal:** Sensible growth in Nacogdoches that takes advantage of proximity to services and amenities and minimizes the strain on tax revenue.

**Goal:** Preservation and use of natural resources as design features incorporated into sensitive, creative neighborhood development.

#### Objectives

- ◆ Locate neighborhoods within proximity to other residential areas and non-residential uses with ample opportunity for interconnection and interaction.
- ◆ Encourage residential development to be located within proximity to existing services and resources as a means of reducing construction and development costs, as well as long-term cost to the community.
- ◆ Incorporate alternative design techniques into residential areas where sensitive or significant areas can be protected and marketed.

#### Actions

- Consider the use of incentives to entice development within or adjacent to established neighborhoods, including tax deferral, fee waivers, and a variety of other methods. Provide incentives to developers willing to develop adjacent to existing urban areas and to create points of interconnectivity, including streets, sidewalks, green spaces and paths.
- Eliminate incentives for housing development that occurs beyond close proximity to significant existing development, services and facilities.
- Avoid separation of residential areas through gated developments.
- Adjacent residential developments should be adequately linked with transportation arteries and pedestrian connections to encourage interaction and neighborhood mobility.
- Determine acceptable levels of service for all public services and facilities and make them a consideration in approval of new development to ensure that water, wastewater, law enforcement, fire protection, emergency

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medical service, trash disposal, and recreational opportunities are adequately available.

- Establish a land trust that can be charged with acquiring and managing sensitive lands throughout Nacogdoches with particular emphasis on designated sensitive or significant areas.
- Encourage acquisition of development rights within designated sensitive or significant areas.
- Create an option to utilize cluster residential development as a means of reducing lot size, increasing open space and building upon the concept of "urban hamlets."
- Establish an areawide map that indicates primary conservation areas to be protected during subdivision design.
- Determine criteria for secondary conservation areas, conservation easements and concept plan approval.
- Revise ordinances as needed to allow for uncommon lot design in appropriate circumstances, including "flag" lots.

