

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose –

1. To raise the level of understanding of the physical needs of the RPIA area.
2. To reliably document the physical characteristics of the RPIA area as background for decision-making and action plans.

Scope – The area includes only the boundaries of the RPIA as defined in the by-laws.

Procedures –

1. An on-the-ground survey of more than a dozen physical features was conducted during the winter of 2003 and 2004. Data was recorded, transposed into a useable format, summarized, analyzed and
2. Information as provided by the Tarrant Appraisal District on the Internet was used to investigate the nature and character of housing.
3. Data and information from these two (2) sources was summarized into report format. The report is entitled RPIA – AN OPPORTUNITY AND CONSTRAINTS STUDY and contains ten (10) different major subjects. Details of the collected data are included in nine (9) different appendixes.

Streets – The quality of a residential street is a major component in the quality and value of a neighborhood and an individual residence. A street with a poor (rough) driving surface, deteriorating curb and gutter and poor traffic safety features will negatively impact the value of property.

The RPIA area has approximately 9.5 miles of streets. The condition of these streets are:

- 33 % (3.16 miles) require complete re-construction.
- 35% (3.32 miles) require major maintenance.
- 31 % (2.98) require minor maintenance.

The recently approved City bond election will improve only two (2) streets, College Avenue and James Avenue, this amount to approximately less than one-half of a mile. These approved improvements will have very little impact on the overall condition of RPIA streets. In comparison the City of Fort Worth reports the condition of all City streets as:

12% Poor

28% Fair
28% Good
32% Excellent

The six (6.3) miles, 67% of RPIA streets requiring maintenance must become a major priority for the neighborhood. Further deterioration will only create greater economic and blighting problems.

Any future re-construction of streets, including those in the recent bond issue, should give serious consideration to promoting the reduction in width of the pavement surface.

The street configuration, especially along the area's edges, creates some very real and costly problems:

1. Berry Street and 8th Avenue/Cleburne Road will continue to carry more traffic. Such heavy traffic makes it difficult to egress/ingress the neighborhood and the commercial function along these major thoroughfares has a negative impact on the adjacent residential property.
2. The six (6) streets, which intersect Cleburne Road at an awkward and unsafe angle, create difficult traffic problems.
3. The triangular shape area bounded by Berry Street, Cleburne Road and the alley east of Stanley Avenue is not well suited for single-family use. These two (2) acres provides a good opportunity to create an alternate and appropriate use of the land.
4. Page Street on the east side of Hemphill Street intersects Hemphill at a very dangerous spot – railroad and major street. The traffic generated along Page east of Hemphill is not related to the RPIA area.
5. The two (2) triangular parcels of land created by the street system and BNSF Railroad have no value as residential use; however, they could become neighborhood parks or a small urban forest.
6. Lipscomb Street and the BNSF Railroad becomes an unsightly unit just north of Capps street.
7. That portion of Capps Street lying in the RPIA area is a 30-foot Right-of-Way. It dead-ends at Adams Street on the west and crosses the railroad at a dangerous angle on the east.

There is a lack of pedestrian street crossing markings in several critical areas including the schools within and serving the RPIA area.

Conclusions and suggestions regarding streets –

1. It is imperative that the RPIA develop and maintain a solid working relationship with City elected officials and City staff in order to accomplish the various public facilities needs of the neighborhood.
2. Priority should be given to maintaining the 3.3 miles of street that needs major work; otherwise, they will continue to deteriorate to the point that re-construction is necessary.
3. Some of the new concrete streets have developed major drainage problems, which are compounding their usefulness. The City should be made aware of this problem and ask to “fit it”.
4. At the past and present rate of capital expenditures by the City on RPIA streets it will require thirty (30) years or more to re-construct the “bad” streets in the RPIA area.
5. Reducing the width of pavement of five (5) streets in the future would substantially reduce the cost of re-construction. This would increase the width of the parkway and for all intent and purposes create a larger lot for the residences facing the street. Accomplishing this reduction will require concurrence from the property holder as well as the City.
6. The RPIA should request the City to “mark” pedestrian crossings near the three (3) schools in the neighborhood immediately.
7. Reducing (necking-down) most of the residential streets intersecting with Berry, 8th / Cleburne, similar to the Elizabeth Avenue/8th Avenue entry into Ryan Place, would discourage unnecessary through traffic in the neighborhood.
8. RPIA leadership must develop a working rapport with the owners and lease holders of the commercial property situated on the boundary of the RPIA area in order to:
 - Keep the area free of litter.
 - Protect residential value with physical screening.
 - Reduce unnecessary through traffic.
 - Assist in a coordinated neighborhood tree-planting program.
9. Closing Capps Street east of the railroad is a logic solution to reducing unnecessary traffic within the RPIA area. The process will require a long and concentrated effort. That effort should began immediately.

Housing – Contrary to popular opinion the housing in the RPIA area is not homogeneous. In reality the housing is a mixture of size, age, style, construction materials and occupancy.

Approximately 64% of the housing is masonry and 36% wood frame.

The smallest house was reported by TAD as 400 square feet and the largest 6,570 SF.

The RPIA area lies in five (5) different “subdivisions” and its taken over a half of a century to substantially complete the development. Home building occurred basically in two (2) major periods:

- 1901 to 1928 approximately 40% of the homes were constructed.
- 1943 to 1948 another 40% was constructed.

A residence which does not have a “modern” kitchen and bathrooms is considered to be “functional obsolete”.

TAD reports 34 properties with two (2) or more dwelling units.

TAD records show that there are 828 single-family housing units in the five (5) subdivisions that make up the RPIA area. It indicates that 667 or 80% of these are owner occupied with the remaining 161 or 20% as renter occupied.

Conclusions and suggestions regarding housing –

1. The three (3) major thoroughfares bordering the RPIA as well as the commercial use along two (2) of the streets have a profound influence on the type and quality of housing. Most of the impacted area is not well suited for single-family dwellings, their value and consequently the adjacent property’s value are being effected by these outside forces. In most cases the land is better suited for some use other than single-family.
2. There are several vacant lots in the RIPA area, which could be developed as “high quality” housing provided the RPIA organization would promote and assist a professional developer. A major problem in getting what is good for the neighborhood onto these vacant lots is “land assembly”. RPIA might talk to Fort Worth South about techniques in acquiring and holding property for future development.

3. Suggest the RPIA leadership contact the Park Glen Homeowners Association and Summerfields Neighborhood Association regarding their deed restrictions and public improvement district (PID).

Street Trees – There is nothing more pleasant than a *tree lined shady residential street and nothing builds property values like a mature shade tree*. Accomplishing tree lined shady residential streets the RPIA organization needs to promote the planting of approximately 1,200 trees.

Conclusions and suggestions regarding street trees –

1. Create a standing committee to plan, coordinate and implement an annual street tree-planting program.
2. Create a method of accepting street tree planting contributions.
3. The two (2) parcel located at College/Cantey and Adams/Lowden could become the first neighborhood urban forest in the City.
4. Contributions for street tress plantings could be solicited from RPIA residents, local businesses and local foundations.

Land Use – The RPIA area occupies approximately 300 acres. The use of the land is being used as follows:

Land Uses	Acres	Percent of Total
Single Family	169.4	56.8%
Multi Family	5.5	1.8%
Institutional/Public	18.3	6.1%
Commercial	11.8	3.9%
Vacant Land (Res.)	4.9	1.6%
Vacant Land (Comm.)	1.8	0.6%
Street Right-of-Way	75.1	25.2%
Alley Right-of-Way	<u>11.1</u>	<u>3.7%</u>
	298.2	100.0%

The RPIA area has three (3) land use problems, which substantially impact the value of property and the quality of life:

- Street patterns – 25% of the area is used for streets but major thoroughfares and railroads have interrupted the street pattern, which was designed for residential use.
- The adjacency of residential use to commercial use creates a serious non-compatibility problem.
- Railroads along the east and west borders create a noise nuisance and a negative visual impact.

Conclusions and suggestions regarding land use –

1. Every effort should be made to assist in the development of high quality commercial facilities along the east side of 8th Avenue.
2. Closing the east/west alley serving Braum’s Ice Cream would help to reduce some residential and commercial conflict and reduce the litter problem.
3. The planting of trees along both sides of 8th Avenue would give the perimeter an unique aesthetic character
4. The owners and leaseholders of all commercial property should be ask to actively participate in the Association.
5. Closing or “narrowing” the ends of Stanley, James, 8th, Ryan, Willing and 6th near Berry would reduce unnecessary and unwanted traffic. The “islands” created by narrowing should be landscaped and lighted.
6. The redevelopment of the two (2) acres located in the southwest corner of the RPIA area would benefit the area tremendously.
7. The two (2) “left-over” land parcels along the BNSF railroad should be acquired and developed for the benefit of the RPIA area residence.
8. Installing an enclosed storm drain system and screening the BNSF along Lipscomb would help to preserve neighborhood property values.

Drainage – The storm drainage system within parts of the neighborhood are potentially a problem.

Conclusions and suggestions regarding drainage –

1. Need an information program to keep citizen aware of keeping the gutters free of leaves.
2. The City should be periodically requested to inspect the storm drainage system to assure it is working properly.

3. RPIA could experiment with installing “honeycomb cell pavers” as a method to reducing storm water run-off.

Sidewalks – It is impossible to walk on a sidewalk along any street from one boundary to another in the RPIA area. Walking from one boundary to another requires the pedestrian to use the street. The reason one cannot make this journey on a pathway designated for pedestrian movement is simple: many streets do not have any sidewalks, sidewalks are not continuous there are vacant gaps and a great deal of the sidewalks are so deteriorated or uneven they are unsafe.

There are approximately 1,091 opportunities for sidewalks in the RPIA area:

SIDEWALKS		% Of TOTAL
No Sidewalk	245	22.4%
Minor Cracked/Broken	178	16.3%
Major Cracked/Broken	<u>75</u>	<u>6.9%</u>
Sub-Total	498	45.6%
Good Condition	<u>593</u>	<u>54.5%</u>
Total	1091	100.0%

The City is not obligated to install sidewalks at the time it re-constructs a street.

Conclusions and suggestions regarding sidewalks –

1. Waiting on the City to install or reconstruct neighborhood sidewalks will take a very, very long time; therefore the RPIA must develop a sidewalk program with a plan and priorities and promote the City into assisting with implementation.
2. A committee should be assigned the task of developing a “Neighborhood Pedestrian Movement Plan”. Such a plan should consider the use of alleys as one of its elements.

Visual Pollution – Visual pollution is a very subjective factor, it deals with identifying those elements within the urban landscape, which are offensive to the individual’s visual senses.

Five (5) elements were surveyed:

Visual Pollution Items	Occurrences	Percent of Total
Driveway not Paved	83	56.0%
Auto parked in front yard	37	25.0%
Litter in yard	13	8.8%
House needing paint/repair	11	7.4%
Junked or abandon auto	4	2.7%
Total	148	100.0%

Some other incidental visual pollution items were also uncovered:

- Refuse dumpsters – not screened from public view.
- Garbage carts – stored in front yard. Many are left on the street several days after scheduled pick-up.
- Overgrown railroad ROW – weeds and debris along both railroads.
- Unkempt alleys – some are a “dumping” ground.
- Billboards – four (4) were found.

All of these items have a negative impact on the quality of life and value of property.

Conclusions and suggestions regarding visual pollution –

1. A continuous “Neighborhood Pride” program needs to be created. Such a program would keep constant pressure on the need to clean-up, fix-up and keep-up you property. It should include residential and commercial property owners.
2. RPIA leadership must develop a working rapport with the City’s code enforcement staff.
3. Keep the local City Councilperson informed of all planned actions.
4. Seek the cooperation of commercial property holders.
5. Report all code violations to the City and report all calls and action status in the newsletter.
6. Removal of the billboards on the perimeter of the neighborhood should become a goal and action plans prepared.

Alleys – Alleys are untapped resource for the citizens of the RPIA area. Alleys comprise approximately 11 acres or 4% of the RPIA area. They vary in width from 12 feet to 20 feet and have a total length of six (6) miles.

The City abandon the use of alleys for garbage collection several years ago they did not abandon them as “utility easements”.

There are many uses to which the neighborhood’s alley could be developed, some are:

- Compost pile for homeowner’s garden and yard.
- Vegetable or flower garden.
- Pathway for walking and biking.
- Small “tot lot” play area.
- Partial basketball court (hoop).

Conclusions and suggestions regarding alleys –

1. RPIA should formulate a “Clean Alley” campaign and implement it, at least, two (2) times a year.
2. A “safe alley” would require the installation of approximately 59 wrought iron alley gates.
3. A “task force” should be appointed to investigate the future use of alleys.
4. Alley driveway approaches need to be paved.

Other Items and Issues -

Taxation and Municipal Expenditures (City of Fort Worth only) - Based on information abstracted out of the TAD records the RPIA area has an approximate total “appraised value” of \$93 million.

This value produces revenue to the City of approximately \$550,000 to \$650,000 annually.

The City uses the RPIA tax income in two (2) ways:

- 75% or approximately \$600,000 to \$700,000 for its General Fund.
- 25% or approximately \$150,000 to \$175,000 for its Interest and Sinking Fund.

The City's General and Operations Fund is the source, which pays for the Municipal function and the Interest and Sinking Fund is used to retire general obligation bonds such as streets, parks, public buildings, etc.

At the present rate of RPIA tax income to the City and other financial factors it appears that it will require 30 to 35 years to get the "needed" three (3) miles of streets re-constructed.

Population – Based on a housing count the population of the RPIA area is approximately 2,168.

Both the south side of the City as well as the RPIA area's population has remained static for the past twenty (20) years.

The RPIA population is equivalent to a small Texas municipality that has its own government. This population represent a formidable voice within the Fort Worth community when organized around common goals.

Historical and Architectural Significance – The age of housing in the RPIA area varies from one (1) year old to a hundred and three (103). Only about 24% or 190 of the home are about eighty (80) years old.

The City has classified 71 residential structure or about 10% of the total housing stock as historical or worthy of historic/cultural designation.

An all out effort should be made to preserve and restore the several "cast stone street name blocks" embedded in the curb along Elizabeth Blvd and its cross streets.

The "Willing Avenue Street Car" needs to be researched, documented and a historical marker put in place.

Communications – The RPIA Newsletter is an effective way to communicate the neighborhood's existing and planned activities and to promote action plans and citizen participation.

Because about 16% of the RPIA area's population has "Spanish surnames" consideration should be given to publishing a newsletter in Spanish.

A new neighborhood directory needs to be prepared. It is a key to “good neighbors” and could be a source of income to the RPIA.

Street Addresses – There are many residences in the RPIA area without street addresses being displayed. The street number is an important safety feature for individual property as well as his/her neighbors.

Ryan Place Street Markers – The City has placed “markers” in and around the neighborhood which help to identify its existence and boundary; unfortunately, the Ryan Place Markers do not adequately cover or delineation the RPIA area.

RPIA Organization – The RPIA by-laws sets forth six (6) very clear statements as its purpose. One is lead to believe that the overall quality of the physical aspects of the area was paramount.

The RPIA leadership and neighborhood property owners need to be concerned over the various issues identified in this report. These issues and others need to be prioritized and solutions needs to planned and implemented.