

# Oak Grove Neighborhood Plan



SUMMER 2023

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Creating a neighborhood plan takes time away from work and family. Oak Grove's neighbors gave their days, evenings, energy and effort to this project. Too many to thank by name, but special thanks to the following neighborhood leaders and groups that have gone above and beyond:

The Escobar Family  
The Miranda Family  
Mr. Greg Kirk  
The Vasquez Family  
The Perez Family  
The Cagle Family  
The Brooker Family  
The Ramirez Family  
The Hammonds Family  
The Lopez Family  
East Side Elementary and Principal Wilkey  
Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise  
Grecia Morales  
Justin Tirsun  
Alondra Gomez-Nunez  
Councilwoman Coonrod  
Councilwoman Noel  
El Sol Supermercado  
Chattanooga Pizza Company

Chattanooga Police Department  
Chattanooga 311  
Chattanooga Planning Department  
Chattanooga Code Enforcement  
Chattanooga Parks Department  
Chattanooga Neighborhood Services



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# INTRODUCTION

## **"WE KNOW WHAT WE NEED WHERE WE LIVE."**

Decisions are made every day that impact our neighborhood. We want to make sure those making decisions are informed about our priorities and desires for the future of Oak Grove.

This plan has been made by the families of Oak Grove to create a clear vision for the future. Input from neighbors and businesses occurred over five months through four workshops, resident surveys, one-on-one interviews and multiple rounds of neighborhood leaders knocking on every door in Oak Grove.

### **What does this plan do?**

This plan puts on display what the priorities are for the community in enhancing their neighborhood.

This plan identifies action steps for both neighbors and the City to hold all parties accountable.

### **What doesn't this plan do?**

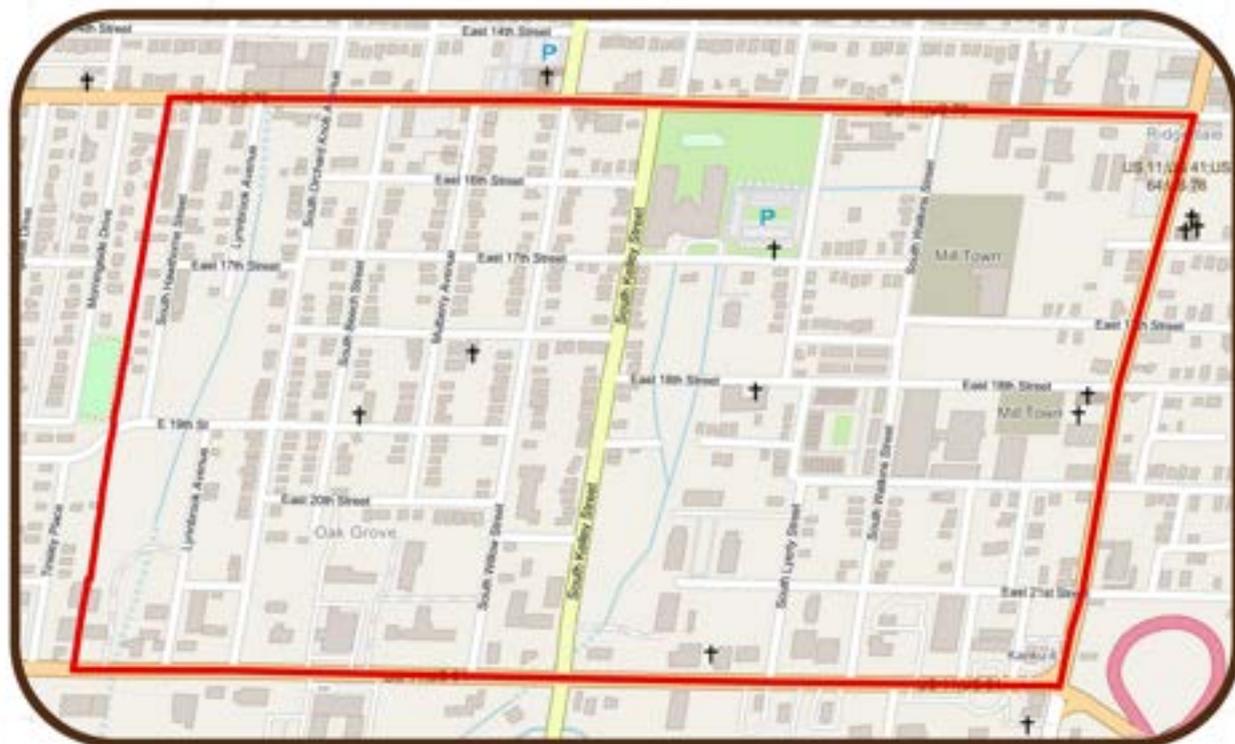
This plan does not change any codes, zones, laws or the like. It is a guide for the community and our representatives.

This plan does not encourage the removal, disenfranchising or minimizing of any person or people in Oak Grove today.

### How will this plan be implemented?

The Oak Grove neighborhood will work on action steps they select to improve their community.

The Oak Grove neighborhood will hold elected officials responsible, through elections, for making our neighborhood priorities their priorities.



# HISTORY

Oak Grove was founded at the turn of the 19th century. A suburb of small town Chattanooga, Oak Grove was called the "queen of the fine residence section." The first record of the area is in an 1889 plat map with only 28 blocks. In 1913, Oak Grove residents voted 36 to 18 to be annexed into the City of Chattanooga.



Chattanooga Rapid Transit ran an electric streetcar, originally known as the Ridgedale Division. This route went to the Georgia Avenue Depot downtown along the southern end of the cemetery, through Highland Park and Ridgedale, then south along Buckley Street all the way to East Lake Park. The power group and electric trolley group merged and renamed themselves TEPCO, which replaced trolley lines with motorbuses in the 1930s. Today, CARTA runs the 4 bus and the 106 bus through the Oak Grove neighborhood.

Oak Grove housed the Standard Coosa Thatcher Mill located at 1800 South Watkins Street. The mill was





erected in 1916 and ran operations until its closing in 2003. Oak Grove grew in numbers as the mill employed several thousand families in the textile industry. Oak Grove residential areas expanded covering Dodds Avenue to the east, 23rd Street to the south, Main Street (known as Montgomery Street at the time) to the north, and

eventually past Feger Place. Oak Grove was a thriving community of mill employees that benefited from higher wages, good healthcare and life insurance. Oak Grove School opened in 1913, followed by Eastside Junior High. Both Schools were closed in 1989 during a mass school closing. In 2003, the new East Side Elementary was opened on the grounds of where Eastside Junior High once stood.

There was a period when Oak Grove had several pocket parks and Montague Park was still public. With new development and the creation of the Montague Sculpture Garden, public parks disappeared from the landscape of the area. Today, Oak Grove does not have a public park. Currently on Lynnbrook Avenue, an imaginative project is leading



to the creation of Lynnbrook Park. It is being rebuilt to provide access to more than 3,000 residents in the area. Lynnbrook Park will be the site of a \$2.8 million project in which the city works with the neighborhood and a coalition of partners to transform a 1.4-acre space into a useful place for outdoor recreation and to correct a longstanding environmental issue.



Today, the Oak Grove neighborhood has a mix of Black, Latino and White community members of all ages. You will hear English, Spanish and several Native American dialects. In this vibrant neighborhood, you will find many small family-owned businesses, and some of the most delicious, and diverse foods. Throughout Oak Grove, you can always find a friendly face to start an interesting conversation.



## PORTRAITS

### Mary Louise Hammonds Years in Oak Grove: 55



"I have really good neighbors. Actually, I have a lot of small children around me now. It's really good. I have a neighbor across the street; she's been my neighbor for 20 years, and it feels like she's my adopted child. I love it here."



### Moisés López Years in Oak Grove: 8

"I love the area and the neighbors that I have. All of my children were born in the time we have lived here in our home on Mulberry Street."



## PORTRAITS



**Gregg Kirk**  
**Years in Oak Grove: 14**

"The people in Oak Grove make me happy. It's a quiet community. It's a good community. Everybody looks out for each other here."



**María Miranda**  
**Years in Oak Grove: 9**

"We have a very nice brotherly and sisterly bond with our neighbors. I believe having a place of community recreation would be a great opportunity for the neighborhood. A place where people can play sports."



## PORTRAITS

**Nicole Boyd**  
**Years in Oak Grove: 14**



"Let's rise as a community. If we all work together, we could do so much more."



**Amber Cagle**  
**Years in Oak Grove: 8**



"Community...we all need to come together and work together to make a safer place for everybody. If you don't have that; you won't have anything."



## PORTRAITS



**María Vásquez**  
**Years in Oak Grove: 13**

"The strength of Oak Grove to me is that the neighborhood welcomed me, an immigrant from Guatemala to a place of many welcoming residents, and I was able to live close to Spanish speaking businesses."



**René Pérez**  
**Years in Oak Grove: 11**

"When I purchased my home in Oak Grove, I remember my house being the most beautiful to me in the neighborhood."



## PORTRAITS

### **Santa Puac** **Years in Oak Grove: 11**



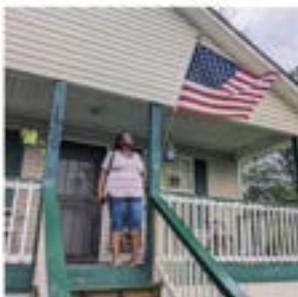
"My babies were born in Oak Grove...on a beautiful and peaceful street. In my Beech Street home, I planted my first vegetable garden, that has now been giving us fresh produce for many seasons."



### **Florinda Pérez** **Years in Oak Grove: 4**

"I think that all the new work in the neighborhood creates a pathway for good opportunity for residents that have been living in the neighborhood for a long time."





## WHY A NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN?

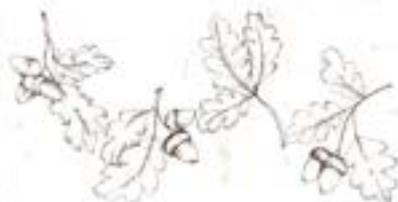
Plans start with a dream, and Oak Grove has a dream. A dream about the future for our kids, for our families to grow, for fun to be had, for opportunities to be realized, and for common everyday joys.

Oak Grove, like much of East Chattanooga, is seeing changes. The Area 3, Historic-River-to-Ridge plan set an overall tone for tens of thousands of Chattanoogaans. Complementary to that, this neighborhood plan is a deep dive into the specific priorities of the neighbors who live in Oak Grove.

### **We want a plan because a plan can:**

- 1. Make sure our vision is heard, and not replaced with someone else's.**
- 2. Prioritize what is important to the neighbors of Oak Grove, and not outside influencers.**
- 3. Set a path to walk and achieve the dreams of Oak Grove families.**
- 4. Hold accountable our government, our neighbors and ourselves.**

This Oak Grove Neighborhood Plan won't sit on a shelf. It will be looked at during our monthly neighborhood meetings. It will be implemented at our neighborhood events. It will be held up with calls to the City, and it will be reviewed frequently by the community.



## HOW THE PLAN WAS MADE

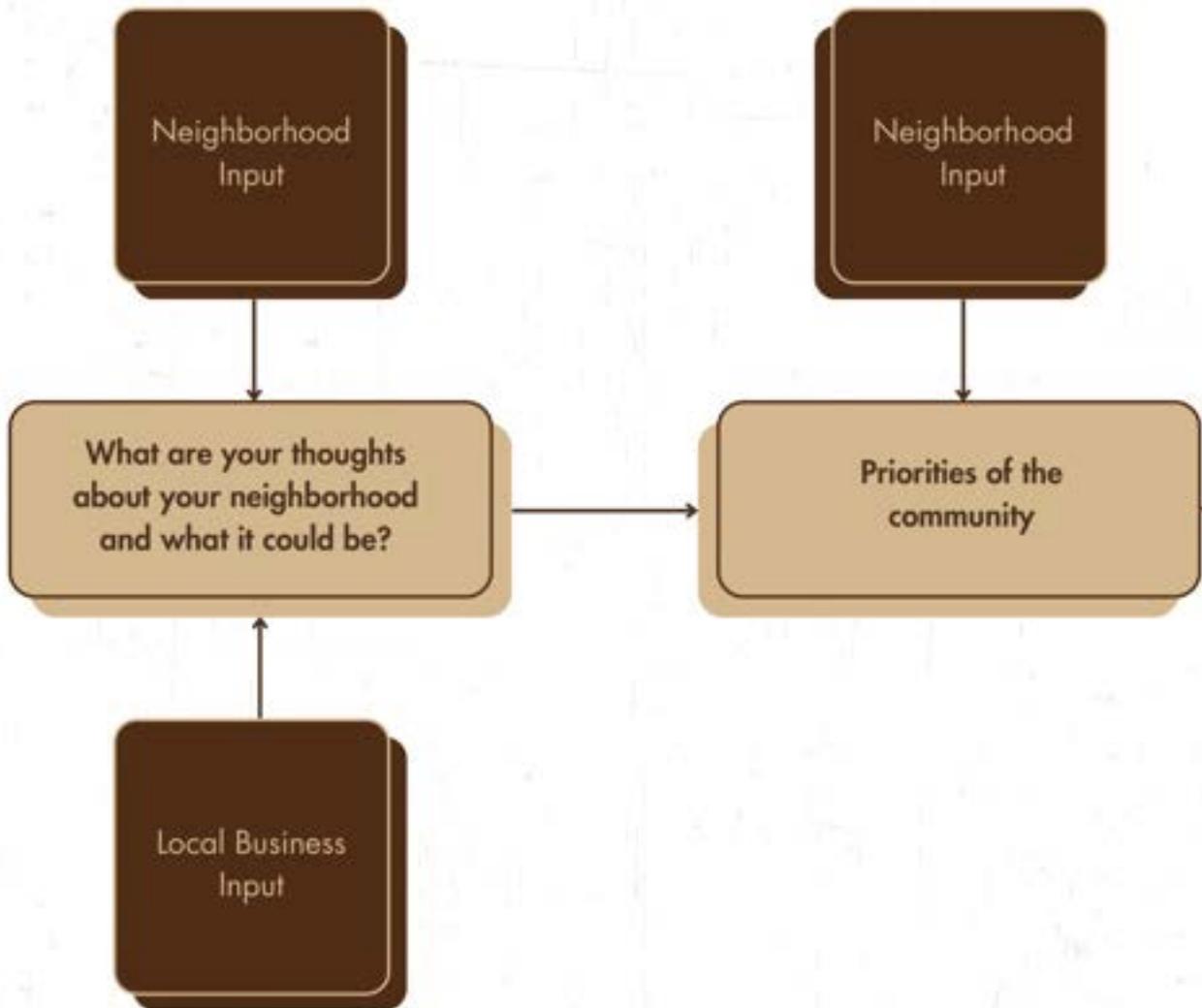
More than 100 neighbors participated in this plan providing more than 800 comments, dreams, concerns and thoughts. A run through the numbers:

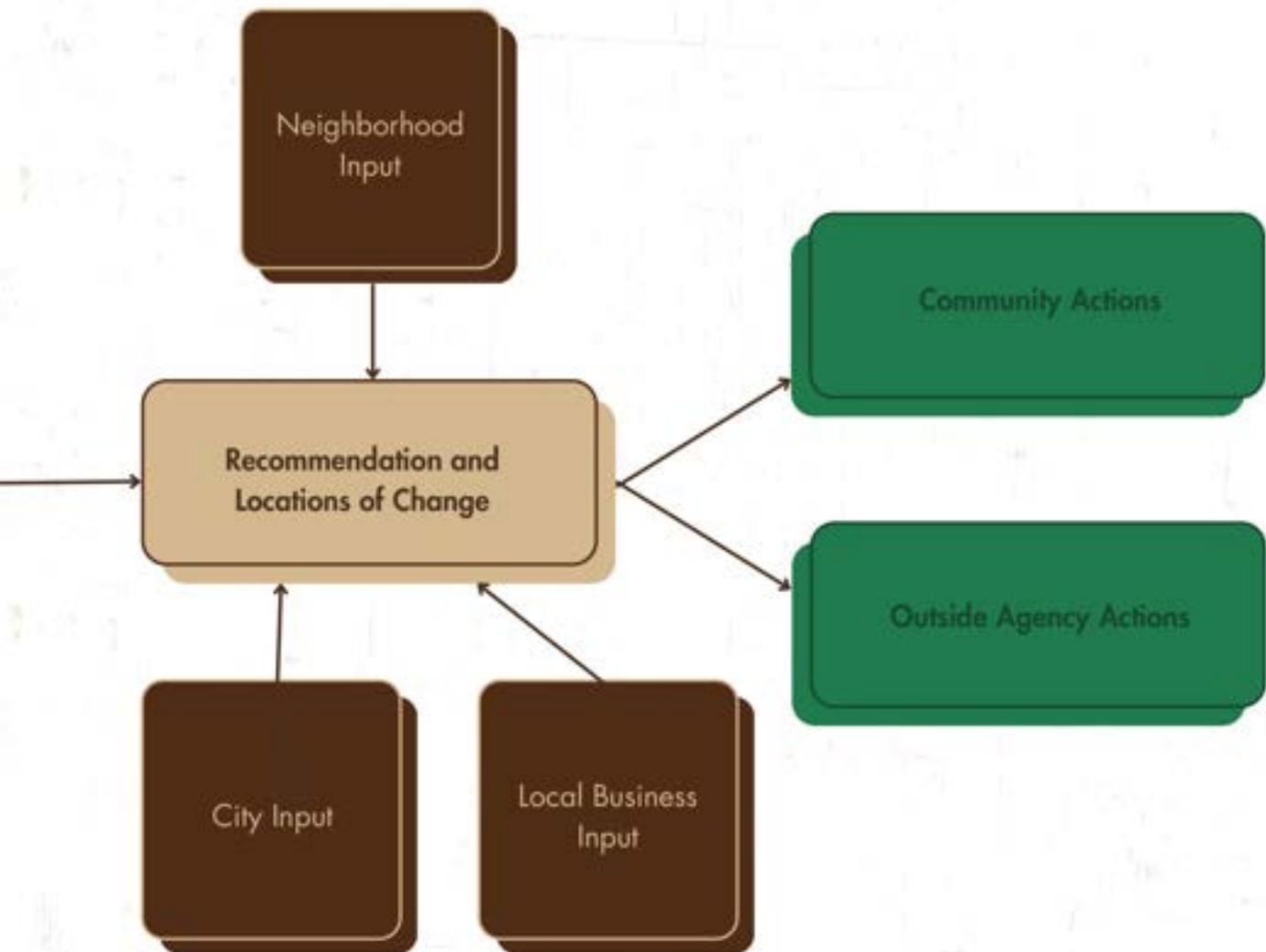
- Every door knocked in Oak Grove
- 450 door hangers placed
- 8 public meetings across 4 months
- 250 buttons given out
- 124 participants
- 393 SWOT cards submitted
- 341 priority surveys collected
- 186 location stickers placed
- 101 action steps submitted

Our neighbors discussed what were thought to be the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to our community. We prioritized these ideas based on importance, immediacy and location. We met together and with City departments to discuss how we can make progress on our vision for a better Oak Grove.



SEE FLOWCHART ON THE  
FOLLOWING PAGES



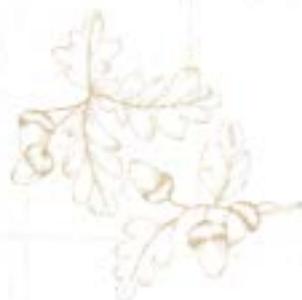


## THE WORK TO BE DONE

124 different neighbors helped us come up with the below priority list for Oak Grove.

- 1.Reduce speeding in the neighborhood.
- 2.Repair roadways and sidewalks.
- 3.Address crime and prostitution in the neighborhood.
- 4.Create safer ways to walk in the neighborhood.
- 5.Provide more adult education opportunities.
- 6.Deal with stray animals.
- 7.Address lack of street lighting.
- 8.Address drunk driving in the neighborhood.
- 9.Make the neighborhood look nicer.
- 10.Reduce drug abuse in the neighborhood.
- 11.Provide more jobs in the area.
- 12.Create more parks.
- 13.Manage flooding in the neighborhood.

Many of these priorities are interconnected. Speeding and safer ways to walk go hand in hand. Addressing crime and prostitution and a lack of street lighting impact each other. The quality-of-life factors that determine how well we live overlap immensely.



The highest priority is reducing speeding in our neighborhood. Over the last three years, there have been dozens of speed violations in our community. And those are just the ones who got caught. Reckless driving has led to accidents and even pedestrians being struck or nearly struck. Throughout planning, neighbors identified a vast swath of the neighborhood where speeding is an issue needing to be addressed. (See map Road Priority Map)

The roadways and sidewalks in Oak Grove are in desperate need of repair. Whether you are traveling 19th Street where the asphalt has crumbled into gravel, walking 17th Street where the makeshift sidewalk has fallen into the creek - these areas are unsuitable and dangerous. Neighbors have identified a vast swath of the neighborhood where roadways and sidewalks are in desperate need of repair. (See map Road Priority Map)

Crime and prostitution is a serious issue in our neighborhood. There have been over 100 criminal incidents to occur in the past few years. This volume of criminal activity directly and indirectly impacts the quality of life for Oak Grove's families and neighbors. Many of these incidents go unreported out of fear. Some incidents are reported, but don't lead to arrests. Neighbors have identified a vast swath of the neighborhood where crime and prostitution issues need to be addressed. (See map Safety Priority Map)

Our neighbors want to be able to safely walk in the neighborhood, whether this is parents and children walking to school, neighbors walking to local stores, or a resident simply enjoying a walk through our community. There are many issues which impact the safety of the neighborhood's walkability, but the largest is a lack of safe and clear sidewalks. Neighbors have identified where sidewalks need to be added, repaired or cleared of vehicles. (See map Safety Priority Map)

Education doesn't end outside the school doors. We have a sizable population of neighbors who want to better themselves. This can mean adult education around language, finance, job skills or basic home improvement. Neighbors have identified these four topics, believing they could improve their quality of life.

Stray animals terrorize neighbors and keep us awake. From loose dogs that chase residents to unmanaged chickens that crow early in the morning. Our neighborhood should feel safe. Neighbors have identified where loose dogs have been an issue. (See map Beautification Priority Map)

The street lighting in Oak Grove is inconsistent and leaves gaps. For safety and to mitigate crime, those gaps in lighting need to be resolved. The primary street with gaps needing assessed is 17th Street. Many children walk on their way to and from school down that street. Neighbors have identified where better street lighting is desired. (See map Safety Priority Map)

Drunk driving is a serious issue in our neighborhood. There have been dozens of drunk driving incidents over the last three years. Drunk driving can lead to speeding, collisions and accidents with pedestrians. Neighbors have identified where drunk driving is a continued issue. (See map Safety Priority Map)

The beauty and upkeep of the neighborhood is important for neighborhood pride. The housing stock in Oak Grove is in need of some love. In addition, our neighborhood has several gateways and through-streets that need tending. Neighbors have identified which streets should be the focus of beautification. (See map Beautification Priority Map)

Reducing drug abuse in the neighborhood is a priority. Drugs have been a plague across the country, and Oak Grove is no different. Neighbors have been discussing with local police, schools and other agencies how to tackle this issue in our neighborhood.

Ensuring neighbors can find jobs close to home is an important priority. Oak Grove is working hard to enhance our community. Making sure we take every opportunity to inform Oak Grove neighbors of the new and better paying jobs in the area.

Oak Grove has no parks or community centers, which is an issue for the neighborhood. Having places for neighbors to relax, exercise and play provides a variety of benefits. Parks play a role in both public health and building community. Neighbors have identified where potential parks could be located in the future. (See map Beautification Priority Map)

Flooding is a major issue in the neighborhood. Stagnate water can lead to public health issues and mold inside homes is concerning. Neighbors have mapped where flooding has occurred in both the public and private realm. (See map Safety Priority Map)



## ACTION STEPS

To make our community better and safer, a series of action steps have been collected. Each action has been assigned to one of three common goals: safety, access and beautification. Each action has been tasked to the appropriate agency, organization or community. These action steps should be reviewed regularly to ensure progress.

### Safety

**ACTION:** Increase neighborhood reports to the Police Captain and start a Neighborhood Watch

**PRIORITY:** Address crime and prostitution in the neighborhood

**RESPONSIBLE:** Oak Grove Neighborhood

**ACTION:** Activate Narcotics and Vice Unit in specific locations of Oak Grove

**PRIORITY:** Address crime and prostitution in the neighborhood

**RESPONSIBLE:** Chattanooga Police Department

**ACTION:** Develop new methods for non-English speaking residents to communicate with the Police Department

**PRIORITY:** Address crime and prostitution in the neighborhood

**RESPONSIBLE:** Chattanooga Police Department and Oak Grove Neighborhood

**ACTION:** Conduct a Neighborhood Walk to identify alley lighting gaps

**PRIORITY:** Address a lack of street lighting  
**RESPONSIBLE:** Oak Grove Neighborhood

**ACTION:** Replace broken streetlights and install new lights in gaps

**PRIORITY:** Address a lack of street lighting  
**RESPONSIBLE:** 311 and Intelligent Cities Division

**ACTION:** Bring in CPD Traffic Unit at locations identified by community for drunk drivers

**PRIORITY:** Address drunk driving in the neighborhood  
**RESPONSIBLE:** 311 and Chattanooga Police Department

**ACTION:** Build a Storm Water Management System on Lynnbrook

**PRIORITY:** Manage flooding in the neighborhood  
**RESPONSIBLE:** Chattanooga Parks Department and Chattanooga Public Works

**ACTION:** Map flooding in Oak Grove and develop a plan to stop it

**PRIORITY:** Manage flooding in the neighborhood

**RESPONSIBLE:** Chattanooga Public Works

## **Access**

**ACTION:** Use tactical public art to reduce speeds

**PRIORITY:** Reduce speeding in the neighborhood

**RESPONSIBLE:** Oak Grove Neighborhood and City Planning Department

**ACTION:** Have the City do speed studies on E 17th Street, Beech Street and Willow Street

**PRIORITY:** Reduce speeding in the neighborhood

**RESPONSIBLE:** Chattanooga Department of Transportation

**ACTION:** Install the rest of a sidewalk along E 17th Street and East Side Elementary

**PRIORITY:** Repair roadways and sidewalks

**RESPONSIBLE:** Chattanooga Department of Transportation and Chattanooga Public Works

**ACTION:** Write letters and send pictures to 311 and elected officials on problem roads and sidewalks

**PRIORITY:** Repair roadways and sidewalks

**RESPONSIBLE:** Oak Grove Neighborhood

**ACTION:** Provide an illustrative paving plan for Oak Grove

**PRIORITY:** Repair roadways and sidewalks

**RESPONSIBLE:** Chattanooga Department of Transportation and Chattanooga Public Works

**ACTION:** Create a walk to school group

**PRIORITY:** Create safer ways to walk in the neighborhood

**RESPONSIBLE:** Oak Grove Neighborhood

**ACTION:** Install crosswalks with a refuge island at the E 17th Street intersections with S Lyerly Street and S Kelly Street

**PRIORITY:** Create safer ways to walk in the neighborhood

**RESPONSIBLE:** City of Chattanooga Planning Department

## **Beautification**

**ACTION:** Bring in experts around home maintenance, landscaping and City services to teach the community

**PRIORITY:** Provide more adult education opportunities

**RESPONSIBLE:** Oak Grove Neighborhood and Chattanooga Neighborhood Services

**ACTION:** Break linguistic barriers in the community with Spanish language offerings

**PRIORITY:** Provide more adult education opportunities

**RESPONSIBLE:** Oak Grove Neighborhood and Outside Organizations

**ACTION:** Work with McKamey to identify where loose animals are congregating and nesting

**PRIORITY:** Deal with stray animals

**RESPONSIBLE:** Oak Grove Neighborhood and McKamey Animal Center

**ACTION:** Curb-appeal projects along gateway streets such as S Willow, S Kelly, and Lynnbrook

**PRIORITY:** Make the neighborhood look nicer

**RESPONSIBLE:** Oak Grove Neighborhood

**ACTION:** Have alleys cleaned

**PRIORITY:** Make the neighborhood look nicer

**RESPONSIBLE:** Oak Grove Neighborhood, Chattanooga Public Works and 311

**ACTION:** Support local businesses by using them for local events and routine needs

**PRIORITY:** Provide more jobs in the area

**RESPONSIBLE:** Oak Grove Neighborhood and Local Businesses

**ACTION:** Build a passive park in Oak Grove

**PRIORITY:** Create more parks

**RESPONSIBLE:** Chattanooga Parks Department

**ACTION:** Build the East Line Greenway

**PRIORITY:** Create more parks

**RESPONSIBLE:** Chattanooga Parks Department and Local Developers

**ACTION:** Open the East Side Elementary playground to the public

**PRIORITY:** Create more parks

**RESPONSIBLE:** Chattanooga Parks Department and Hamilton County Department of Education



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