

Onekama Community Master Plan  
Vision Session II  
July 17, 2008

Summary

Approximately fifty-eight residents, business owners, community members, and Village and Township officials all interested in voicing their ideas about the Onekama community participated in the second visioning process on July 17, 2008. This session was scheduled particularly to give season residents an opportunity to engage in the process and have their voices heard. The session consisted of a series of brainstorming exercises in which small groups of participants worked together to formulate ideas about the future of the community.

During the workshops participants outlined some of the issues concerning the Village and Township. They focused on particular areas of concern, then recorded their ideas and established priorities by voting for those most important to them. Finally, they shared their results with the entire audience. The ideas that came out of each small group were diverse, but they also had many commonalities.

Presented here, organized around the brainstorming exercises, are the results.

**Exercise One: Understanding the Present**

Small group discussion: Participants are asked to brainstorm the things they feel most proud and most sorry about the Onekama Community. This discussion follows the rules of brainstorming. After each group has compiled their list, each member is given three dots and is asked to vote on the proudest "prouds" and the sorriest "sorries". The group determines the three top prouds and sorries. Sheets are collected from each table and posted on the wall.

Participants felt **proud** about the following (the highlighted comments received the most votes):

- ***Excellent water quality***
- ***Easy access to the lake***
- ***Certified watershed plan***
- ***Lake Michigan and Portage Lake***
- ***Schools***
- ***Community Spirit (support of newer residents)***
- ***Master Plan***
- ***Great biking***
- ***Lake Michigan beach***
- ***Friendliness***
- ***Creativity / abundance of artists***
- ***New small businesses***
- ***Beauty of the lake / area***
- ***Village Park / North Point Park***
- ***Good Restaurants***

- *Gorgeous lake*
- *Natural beauty of area*
- *Progressive school*
- *Continued community involvement*
- *The people - diverse*
- *Beauty / Character of Small Town / small town feel*
- *Fairs & Festivals*
- *Fishing and boating*
- *History*
- *Safe*
- *Generation families*
- *Cleanliness*
- *Concerts in the park*
- *Destination / slice of heaven*
- *Farms and orchards*
- *Natural springs*
- *Small Town A+*
- *Location*
- *Sports activities; fishing, camping, golfing, skiing*
- *Condos*
- *911 First response*
- *Clinic*
- *Churches*
- *Jetty*
- *Access to both lakes*
- *Grocery Store*
- *No parking meters*
- *Farr Community Center*

Participants were **sorry** to see the following things in the downtown (the highlighted comments received the most votes):

- ***Village park***
- ***Downtown Development***
- ***Lack of complete sewer system***
- ***Invasive species in lakes***
- ***No streetscape / curb appeal***
- ***Loss of Businesses / not enough businesses***
- ***Condition of Beaches***
- ***Lack of lake access especially south side***
- ***Lack of acquiring public lands along lake***
- ***Lack of communication between village and twp officials, staff and seasonal residents***
- ***No blight ordinance / blighted buildings***
- ***Zoning inequities***

- **Appearance of fairgrounds**
- **Recycling**
- **Job opportunities / quality jobs**
- **Lack of bike paths**
- **No public marina**
- **No good swimming area in Village**
- *Inadequate storm sewer*
- *Lack of technology (high-speed internet)*
- *Poor cell phone access*
- *Condo's*
- *Youth activities*
- *Aging of Onekema population*
- *Affordable housing*
- *Onekema Park beach*
- *Sidewalks*
- *Public water service*
- *Blighted house by park*
- *Zebra mussels*
- *Loss of public land*
- *Lack of drug store*
- *Loss of art gallery*
- *Lack of adequate trash pick-up*
- *Road maintenance*
- *Bathhouse*

**Exercise Two: Events, Developments and Trends**

Small group discussion: Participants are asked to think about events, developments and trends, which they are aware of that affect, the Onekema area. This part of the workshop helps focus the group on specific topics and gives the session grounding in reality. Because this discussion can sometimes be discouraging, each group leader must make sure that the content is both positive and negative and not dwell on any one topic for too long. Every effort was made to discuss all topics.

Comments were loosely focused and recorded under the following headings:

- Development Trends
- Natural Resources
- Agricultural
- Waterfront
- Downtown
- Housing
- Traffic
- Community Facilities
- Other

### Development Trends

- *Condominiums / pressure toward higher density housing*
- *Growth in population*
- *Increased retiree population*
- *Loss of local jobs*
- *State economy*
- *Fewer young families as permanent residents*
- *Growing pressure on government for services*
- *Growing need for service industry*
- *Income disparity*
- *Increased development*
- *More visible art community*
- *Improvement in health care access*
- *Aging, but 'hip' population*

### Natural Resources

- *Disappearance of the wetlands*
- *Maintain natural beauty*
- *Sand dunes are disappearing*
- *Becoming more aware of environmental issues ie: Portage Lake watershed*
- *Green Energy*
- *Lack of control over gas/oil wells*
- *Save green space*
- *Inconsistent zoning practices with regards to environment*
- *Wind energy – green practices*
- *Higher energy costs*

### Agricultural

- *Community supported agricultural markets*
- *Loss of farm and rural property / negative subdivision*

### Waterfront

- *Fluctuating water level / decreasing*
- *Invasive species*
- *Increased power watercraft*
- *More kayaking*
- *Public access to lakes / attacks on public access*
- *Fresh water more important*
- *Septics hurting water quality*

### Downtown

- *Development Trends*
- *More dining and retail options*
- *Increase in support of local businesses*

### Housing

- *Need new housing*
- *Slow real estate market*
- *Acreage division*
- *Lack of affordable property*
- *Too much mega home development*
- *No elderly housing*

### Traffic

- *Increased traffic –pedestrian, commercial, etc.*
- *More cycling*

### Community Facilities

- *Expand Public Services (ie: clinic)*
- *Improvement in civic facilities*
- *Address overweight children with healthy facilities for biking, etc. (trails)*

### Other

- *Overcoming petty politics*
- *Planning committee working together / involving community*
- *More cooperation between summer & full time residents*
- *One government between Village and Township*
- *School Improvements*
- *Declining school enrollments*
- *More community involvement*
- *Growing support for school (bond passing)*
- *Impact of budget cuts on public services*
- *High taxes are a problem*

### **Exercise Three: The Preferred Future**

The participants were invited to take an imaginary ride through the Onekama Community in the year 2018. Each participant was asked to describe the images they saw that pleased them the most. These preferred images were recorded in the present tense, using the rules of brainstorming. The discussion moved from one participant to the next without excessive discussion. Each group used the topics explored in the previous discussion as an example of images to describe. Participants were encouraged to visualize other communities and consider if there are businesses or other types of land use development that they have seen in other communities that they would like to see in the Onekama Community. Each person had three dots and was asked to vote for the three most important items on their group's list. Following is a comprehensive listing for this exercise. The items below encompass all items from each of the tables. The bold items designate the items that received the most votes from each table.

- ***Aesthetically pleasing Downtown Streetscape with underground utilities***
- ***Vibrant Downtown***

- *Nice park and beach around the lake*
- *Historical museum*
- *More public use of the schools for the community*
- *Beautified fairgrounds*
- *Channel breakwaters completed with benches on the jetty*
- *Placement of 1930 steel light tower from Portage Channel Pier*
- *More businesses / more diversity / thriving retail*
- *View of the Lake Preserved*
- *Clean lakes and air*
- *Vibrant Arts Community*
- *Public Marina*
- *Planned Growth*
- *Township and Village – one entity*
- *Excellent Zoning and Blight Regulations*
- *Watershed protected from predatory development*
- *Multi use Trails and bike paths (around the lake)*
- *Sewer system around the lake*
- *Protect natural beauty*
- *Controlled development / growth*
- *Accessible waterfront*
- **Museum**
- *Clinics/dentists*
- *Welcome Center*
- *Weekly newspaper*
- *Non commercial street lighting*
- *Year-round concerts*
- *Lots of trees and flowers in the park*
- *Beautiful entrance signs*
- *Open spaces*
- *Walkable shopping*
- *Good fishing*
- *Healthy – vibrant school*
- *Restaurant with a lake view on water*
- *More village and twp owned land on lake*
- *Nature trails near water*
- *No blight on lake*
- *Acquisition program for the lakefront*
- *Fewer pole buildings*
- *Intergenerational community*
- *Eldercare*
- *Healthy agricultural center*
- *Great parks*
- *Well-maintained roads*
- *Community work days*
- *More children*

- *Community spirit continued*
- *Churches still here and operating*
- *Drug store – independent*
- *More opportunities for winter sports*
- *Fewer invasive species*
- *More owner-occupied residents*
- *More diversified economy*
- *Resurgence of family farms*
- *More locally grown and organic food*
- *Community is friendly, welcoming and connected*
- *Onekama park is completely redone and improved with bandshell*
- *Farmer’s Market*
- *Sidewalks everywhere*
- *Alternative energy - wind and solar*
- *Planned growth*

**Exercise Four: Collective Prioritization**

After the presentations by each table, participants were given three dots each to vote on the projects / programs that interested them the most from the top vote getters of all tables. They are, in the order of priority, as follows:

• <i>Maintain Water Quality</i>	26
• <i>Vibrant Downtown</i>	25
• <i>Better Zoning &amp; Blight Regulations</i>	18
• <i>Consolidated Government</i>	10
• <i>Controlled Development</i>	10
• <i>Sewer System Around the Lake</i>	9
• <i>Bike Paths</i>	9
• <i>Greater Use of Schools</i>	8
• <i>Better Downtown Streetscape</i>	7
• <i>Lake Views Preserved</i>	6
• <i>Public Marina</i>	6
• <i>Museum</i>	3
• <i>Accessible Waterfront</i>	1