

**Onekama Community Master Plan Vision Session
 May 27, 2008
 Summary**

Approximately eighty residents, business owners, community members, Village and Township officials all interested in voicing their ideas about the Onekama community participated in the visioning process on May 27, 2008. 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):

- **Portage Lake**
- **Lake Michigan Access**
- **Still Small Town Atmosphere**
- **People**
- **Beauty**
- **Watershed Plan**
- **Lake Quality**
- **Increased Awareness of Environment**
- **Natural Resources and wildlife**
- **Parks**
- *Concerts in the Park*
- *Views*
- *Citizen Participation*
- *Schools*
- *Churchs*
- *Farms – Agriculture - Orchards*
- *Recreation*
- *Cleanliness*
- *Friendliness*

- *Well Water*
- *Library*
- *Petunias*
- *Great spring water*
- *Serenity*
- *Township/Village Planning co-op*
- *Great hardware salesmen*
- *Wastewater Treatment*
- *Restaurants*
- *Fishery*
- *Golf Courses*
- *Civic Pride*
- *Pace*
- *Community Spirit and Pride*
- *Secure and Safe Environment*
- *Residential Growth*
- *Sponsorship of Energy Fair*
- *beaches*
- *Drinking water*
- *Local Produce*
- *Walking Village*
- *Access and Single Family*
- *Zoning Ordinances*
- *Low Crime*
- *Fire and EMS Great!*
- *Community Diversity*
- *Road ends open to public*
- *Civic clubs*
- *New stores/businesses*

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

- ***Losing views of lake***
- ***Ugly Main Street – better streetscape and curb appeal***
- ***No walking or biking paths***
- ***Grandfather precludes incentive***
- ***No continuity in Village (no theme)***
- ***No groundwater protections***
- ***Building conditions***
- ***Lack of businesses***
- ***Lake area development***
- ***Condos***
- ***Invasive species and water quality in Portage Lake***
- ***Waste Water Treatment***

- **Zoning Issues**
- **No Sewers**
- *Tar paper and pole barn house – Main Street (blight)*
- *Threats to lake access*
- *Sidewalks*
- *Signage for parks*
- *Location of Jetty*
- *Stormwater Runoff*
- *Economic base*
- *Difficult for businesses in winter*
- *Development in wetland*
- *Non enforcement of zoning ordinances*
- *Shortage of access to water (recreation)*
- *Loss of agricultural land to residential development (farmland protection)*
- *Loss of wildlife habitat to residential development*
- *Poor stormwater control*
- *Lack of jobs*
- *Lack of good internet for economic incentive*
- *Sprawl*
- *Recycling and waste disposal*
- *No natural gas throughout community*
- *No delimited high speed internet*
- *No continuous sidewalk*
- *Beach cleanup needed*
- *Community communication*
- *Channel depth*
- *Youth leaving*
- *No Drug store*
- *No museum*
- *Lack of formal recycling*
- *Lack of visitor information*
- *Low water level*
- *Too much development*
- *Poor site development Planning (removal of trees in haphazard ways)*
- *Decline in school age population*
- *8 mile intersection*
- *Disappearing wetland*
- *Store hours of some businesses*
- *Small library*
- *Lack of public input/community meetings*
- *Litigious atmosphere*
- *Lack of parks*
- *Lack of funds for community improvements*
- *Bury wires on Main Street*

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 Onekama 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

Development Trends

Lack of management/clarification
 Portage Lake wetlands
 Unity in organizations
 Concerts in the Park
 Planning for the future
 Change in demographics -Need manufacturing businesses to provide jobs for young families
 Developing of tourism (especially restaurants)
 Combine local government?
 Increased burglary
 Increased gas and oil development
 Too much condominium development
 Limited employment opportunities
 Building and zoning inconsistencies
 Challenge of a seasonal economy
 Dwindling school population/jobs
 Increase in retirement population
 Better coordination and communication regarding civic activities
 Continue promotion of watershed forever program
 Improve Manistee County Fair and Onekama Days
 Control Blight
 Coordination between groups on events
 Wind generation
 Non-controlled government
 Water withdrawal
 Youth leaving area
 Decline of real estate
 Deterioration of harbors due to lack of funding

Good restaurants opened over last few years
Less funding from county and state

Natural Resources

Preserving lake quality
Control invasive species
Eco friendly- green
Interest in Environmental quality
Lakeshore being completely developed even in wetlands and floodplains
Good stocking program for walleye/ trout
Movement to improve greenspace around the lake
Portage Lake watershed plan – to preserve water quality

Agricultural

Community garden
Farmers Market
Support local farms
Enhance agriculture
Community supported agriculture (Pierport 7 Springs Farm)
Improved agriculture in the area
Lack of farm labor
Increased use of chemicals
Increased size of orchards
Organic Farms are increasing
Developing alternative agriculture

Waterfront

Maintain open views
Preserve public waterfront land / haphazard shoreline development/ developments
blocking water views
Knowledge of what can be done with ws permits
Public access to waterfront
Increased demand for public marina
Chemical fertilizer run-off
Lakeshore development
Fishing destination year around

Downtown

Bury wires on Main Street
Attract more businesses / loss of businesses
Enhance business area / upgrade commercial district
Dirty streets
Petunia
Restaurant Development
Concern regarding blight
Downtown activity
Website uniting community
Energy Fair – new people
Hard to shop for basic needs

Housing

Affordable housing
 Density
 Enhance housing stock
 Increase in size and cost of housing (average Joe is driven out)
 Expansion into agricultural areas
 Consumption of waterfront
 Deteriorating of water treatment
 Need for Senior housing
 Energy efficient homes being built

Traffic

Reduce speed limit
 Pedestrian safety (trees not being cut – blind areas)
 More parking on Main Street
 No major traffic problems
 Traffic and security issues are increasing

Community Facilities

Public Marina and launch
 Sanitary Sewers
 Park development
 Positive park development
 Community health service
 Energy Fair – new building – development possibility for green energy
 H.S. Community facilities

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 that 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 that received three or more dots from each of the eleven tables.

- *Consolidated Local Government*
- *Cohesive, vibrant Business Area*
- *Infrastructure is kept up to date*
- *Keep the small town feel – no malls on beltway*
- *Downtown is beautiful: new businesses, sidewalks, trees, marina, flowers, historic buildings, underground utilities*

- *Communication is comprehensive and flowing / Main street décor with a theme*
- *Improved wastewater collection around the lake*
- *Better maintenance of storm sewers*
- *Wetland protection*
- *Controlled development, growth with preservation of character*
- *Preservation of Agriculture; farm markets; farm tours / strong agricultural community*
- *More specialty shops*
- *Hike and bike trails*
- *Village Marina*
- *Conservation of open space around the shoreline*
- *Healthy lake and maintenance of effective watershed plan*
- *Preserve the lake views*
- *Landscaping of fairgrounds*

All items listed on the 'Preferred Future' sheets for the eleven tables are included below:

- *Locally sustainable economy*
- *Retention of public road end sites*
- *No blight*
- *Usable boat launch on Andes Point*
- *More boat ramp parking*
- *Parks & Boardwalk around the lake*
- *Village of Onekama as a year-round community*
- *Calling Onekama 'home'*
- *Good planning and zoning attracts working professionals, especially location-neutral types*
- *Watershed plan*
- *Consistent architectural look-maintain historic 'cottage' tradition*
- *Strong school system*
- *Public access to Artesian Springs*
- *Common understanding in the community about what makes us special*
- *Protection of scenic roadways*
- *Zoning for effective development*
- *Inviting parks / Improved Village park*
- *Implement a 2-lake town*
- *Water taxis*
- *Wellhead protection*
- *Affordable housing for all socio-economic levels*
- *Museum/with historical Landmarks ID*
- *Schedule channel dredging*
- *Ridgeline protection and control*
- *Develop Lake access for Village residents*
- *Better communication/promotion of local events*
- *Improved appearance of Marina buildings*

- *Improved School curriculum*
- *Develop management plan for preventing runoff of fertilizers from private properties*
- *Keep the school open*
- *Concerts in the park*
- *Signage*
- *State Park*
- *Energy Farm*
- *Restaurants / restaurants with boat access*
- *Recycling that works*
- *Designated area for dropping brush/leaves, etc.*
- *Fuel efficient transportation*

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:

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| • <i>Improved, attractive, alive downtown with shops and streetscape</i> | 38 |
| • <i>Sanitary sewer around the lake</i> | 30 |
| • <i>Future watershed protection</i> | 21 |
| • <i>Hike and Bike Trail</i> | 12 |
| • <i>Consolidate Local Government</i> | 12 |
| • <i>Retain small town character</i> | 12 |
| • <i>Unobstructed views of the lake</i> | 11 |
| • <i>Controlled growth with preservation of character</i> | 11 |
| • <i>Village public marina</i> | 10 |
| • <i>Underground utilities</i> | 6 |
| • <i>Weekend Farmers Market</i> | 5 |
| • <i>Fairgrounds Beautified</i> | 5 |
| • <i>Natural Resource Protection</i> | 5 |
| • <i>Strong agricultural community</i> | 5 |
| • <i>Healthy lake</i> | 4 |
| • <i>Sidewalks</i> | 3 |
| • <i>Lots of open space around lake</i> | 2 |
| • <i>Keep infrastructure up to date</i> | 2 |
| • <i>Cohesive business area</i> | 1 |