

14. HOUSING, HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

To provide a safe healthy environment in which to live, the City seeks to maintain desired levels of service for housing, health, and social services. All residents should have safe and sanitary housing, free from deterioration or blighting influences. Medical care should be available and accessible, and needs for legitimate social services should be met.

14.1 HOUSING

The City's 1977 Comprehensive Plan included a Housing Element. The nine-page report included an analysis of the existing housing inventory, an evaluation of structural condition, a projection of future housing needs, and a discussion of generalized housing goals and policies. In 1977, it was estimated that Benbrook had approximately 3,545 housing units, of which only 87 were multiple-family dwellings. At that time, only seven single-family houses were considered substandard, and nine single-family houses and five multiple-family units were in need of rehabilitation. The 1977 Plan projected that only five percent of the City's residents would be living in multiple-family dwellings by 1990. The 1977 housing goals and strategies were:

- To provide safe, sanitary, decent housing for all Benbrook citizens,
 - To eliminate discrimination in housing based upon race, color, religion, sex or national origin,
 - To provide an adequate supply of housing in a variety of types, densities, sizes and quantities,
 - To maintain the quality of housing to guard against eventual deterioration and decay,
 - To provide a decent residential environment throughout the City by assuring that all housing receives proper and equitable delivery of public facilities and services,
 - To enforce the City's nuisance ordinance with respect to weeds, junk and debris in residential areas,
 - To enforce the City's zoning ordinance with respect to home occupancy uses conducted in residential dwellings,
 - To develop a capital improvements program aimed at providing curb and gutter and drainage facilities in areas where such deficiencies are present,
 - To organize and encourage annual "paint-up fix-up" campaigns throughout the City, aimed at keeping dwellings in a state of proper repair and maintenance,
 - To require screening of nonresidential activities when adjacent to residential properties,
 - To develop a program to encourage the planting of street and yard trees aimed at improving the aesthetics of residential neighborhoods,
 - To develop a program to cause the removal of substandard deteriorated residential buildings which are beyond feasible economic repair,
 - To provide adequate park, recreation and open space programs and facilities adjacent to residential areas,
- and To insure that adequate off-street parking needs are being met through enforcement of the City's Zoning Ordinance.

Most of these goals have been implemented over the past decade and continue to be valid aims for the City.

The housing stock in Benbrook is relatively new, with over 75 percent of the units constructed within the last 20 years (see Table 14.1). The City's housing mix is still predominately single-family, but the large number of multiple-family units constructed during the late 1970s and early 1980s has significantly increased the number of apartment units available in the City. However, changes in market demand, federal tax benefits and the local economy have caused new multifamily construction to virtually cease in recent years.

**Table 14.1
EXISTING HOUSING STOCK BY TYPE AND YEAR
BENBROOK, TEXAS**

	Single-Family	Multi-Family	Mobile Homes	Total Units
1970 Total Units	2115	57	44	2216
built 1970-1971	345	6	0	351
1972-1974	187	0	0	187
1974-1975	353	0	0	353
1976-1977	650	24	0	674
1978-1979	891	162	0	1053
demolitions 1970-1980	0	0	-44	-44
adjustments 1970-1980	40	0	0	40
1980 Total Units	4393	249	0	4642
built 1980-1981	219	745	0	964
1982-1983	327	488	0	815
1984-1985	539	872	0	1411
1986-1987	189	5	0	194
1988-1989	154	0	0	154
demolitions 1980-1990	-3	-5	0	-8
adjustments 1980-1990	-24	195	34*	205
1990 Total Units	5794	2549	34*	8377
1990-1991	84	0	0	84
1992-1993	92	0	0	92
1994-	79	0	0	79
Demolitions 1991-1994	0	0	0	0
1995 Total Units	6049	2549	34*	8632

* 1990 mobile home count by Census Bureau is believed to be in error

The overall housing goal for the City is:

GOAL 3: Residential neighborhoods should provide a choice of housing stock and be protected from the intrusion of blighting influences.

To meet this goal, the City has adopted a number of objectives and strategies related to residential land uses and housing. Some of these issues are addressed in the Land Use element of this Comprehensive Plan.

The City has adopted a Strategy (Number 3.1.2) that no more than fifty percent of the housing units should be allocated to multifamily residences in an effort to strike a balance between single-family and multifamily land use. In 1994, the actual developed multifamily units comprised about 30 percent of the total housing units. However, the Land Use Plan allocates sufficient property in both single-family and multiple-family classifications that the split at ultimate development will be about equal.

The City has also adopted two strategies (Numbers 3.1.5 and 3.1.6) relating to construction of housing and maintenance of housing and neighborhood quality. New and remodeled housing is constructed in accordance with the latest adopted edition of the Uniform Building Code (and related construction codes), as codified in Title 15 of the Benbrook Municipal Code. The building codes establish minimum standards for materials and construction to protect the health and safety of occupants. The codes are enforced through the issuance of building permits and inspections during construction.

If housing is allowed to deteriorate, it may become hazardous and serve to blight the adjacent property. Housing quality is generally rated on a scale of one to four as follows:

1. No problems
2. Minor repairs required
3. Substantial repairs required
- and 4. Replacement required.

Benbrook has very few structures that fall within Category 3 or 4. When a structure is found to be dangerous or unsafe, the owner is notified of the required improvements under the Uniform Code for the Abatement of Dangerous Buildings. If the owner fails to bring the structure into compliance with the applicable code, the City may have the building demolished.

According to the 1990 Census, 63.1 percent of the housing units are owner-occupied. The median value of owner-occupied units was \$85,000. This compares favorably with the Tarrant Appraisal District's average single-family unit value of \$84,279 in 1990. However, the District estimates that the average household value in 1994 had declined to \$77,955, a decrease of 7.5 percent. Figure 14.1 presents the distribution of single-family parcel value according to the Tarrant Appraisal District. The distribution of housing values according to the 1990 Census is presented in Table 14.2.

Approximately 36.9 percent of the total housing units are occupied by renters. The median rent paid is \$412. On April 1, 1990, approximately 2.2 percent of the owner occupied houses were vacant, while rental units had a vacancy rate of 10.5 percent.

The City enforces certain health and nuisance ordinances to protect adjacent properties. These include abatement of weeds, rubbish, junk vehicles, and stagnant water. Owners are advised of the violation and given 10 days to correct the problem. Failure to comply may result in a citation and the City performing the corrective work, with a lien placed on the property to recover costs.

Several issues in housing need to be addressed in Benbrook. As the population ages, there may be a greater demand for housing elderly parents on single-family lots. Currently, the construction of a second separate living unit, sometimes called a "granny-flat" or "mother-in-law" unit, is a violation of the zoning regulations. This prohibition may need to be modified as a means of providing suitable affordable housing for the elderly.

Figure 14.1 Housing Values

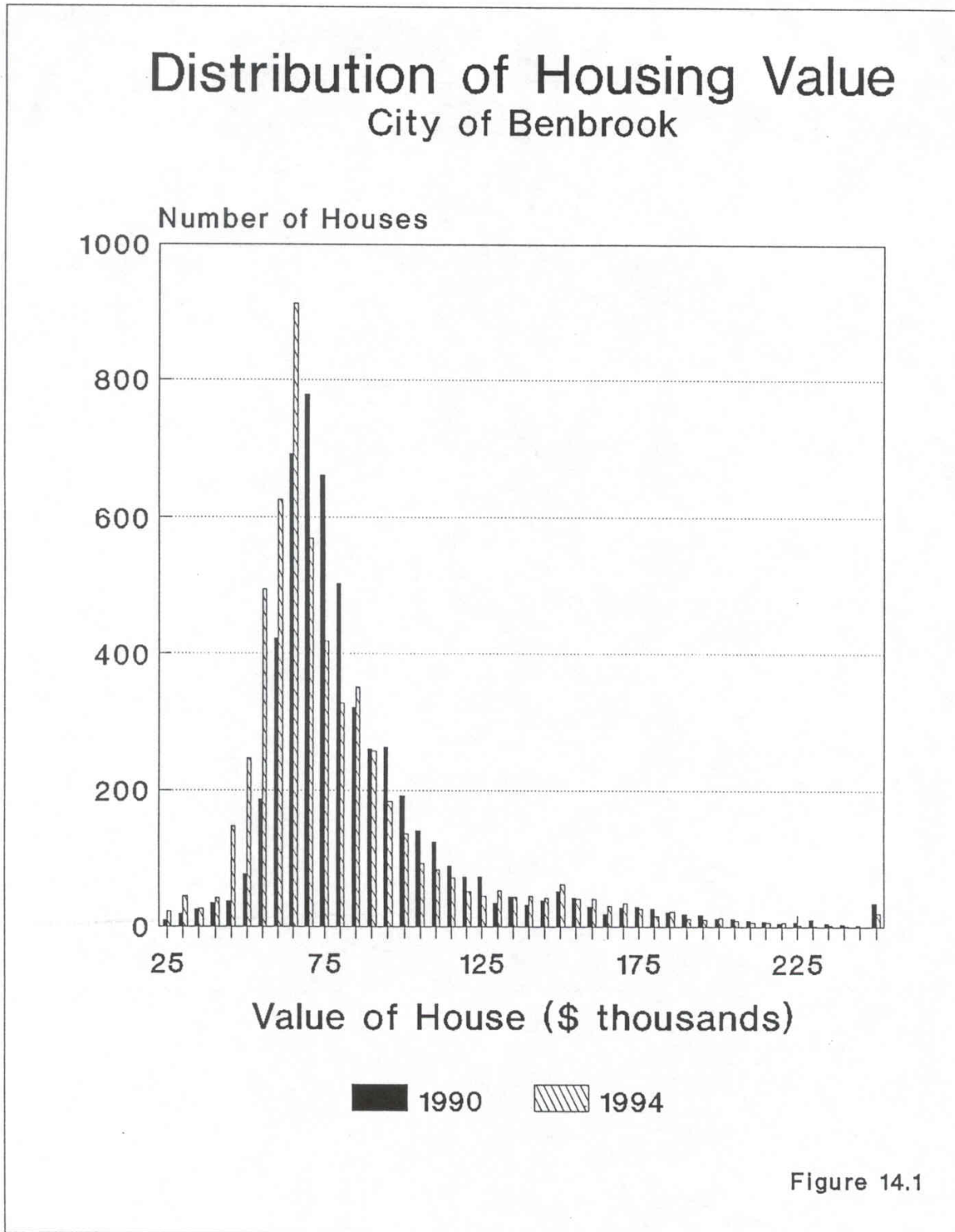


Figure 14.1

**Table 14.2
DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSING BY VALUE**

Value	Percent of Total Units
Less than \$50,000	3.6 %
\$50,000 - \$99,000	68.2 %
\$100,000 - \$149,000	18.4 %
\$ 150,000 - \$199,000	5.7 %
\$200,000 - \$299,999	2.9 %
\$300,000 or more	1.2 %

Source: 1990 Census

A second major issue is the ability of Benbrook residents to afford houses in Benbrook. Tarrant County has estimated that approximately 12 percent of the residents of the 76126 zip code are unable to afford the median rent and 24 percent are unable to afford the median home value (Source: 1992 Tarrant County Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy). These residents are, of course, currently living in houses that are below the median value, but it also means that there is a limitation for them to move up in housing stock because of a lack of income. The City should remain cognizant of the need to promote housing affordability while maintaining housing quality. On the other hand, Benbrook has a relatively low foreclosure rate compared to other cities in Tarrant County.

A third major housing issue will be the changing economic role of housing. For the past four decades, home ownership has been valued as much as an investment as it has as shelter. As the baby boom increased the ranks of home buyers, the increasing value of real estate was a good hedge against inflation and allowed homeowners to sell and move to larger houses, opening smaller houses for new home buyers.

However, as the baby boom bulge has now passed its first-time home buying period by the last half of the 1980s, the demand for housing is falling. This, combined with other economic stresses, has changed the way we must look at housing as an investment. Although the purchase of a single-family house will continue to be the single largest investment made by most families, one can no longer assume that the value of that home will continue to increase at or above the rate of inflation. In fact, many homes have been devalued in recent years over their price in the early 1980s. According to the Tarrant Appraisal District, the average price for a single-family home in Benbrook declined by 7.5 percent from 1990 to 1994. This will also have the effect of reducing movement between homes and limiting the stock available for filtering.

14.2 HEALTH CARE

The City of Benbrook currently provides no direct health care services. No hospitals are located within Benbrook, but two hospitals (Harris Hospital-Southwest and All Saints Hospital-CityView) are within one mile of city limits. Benbrook is located in the Tarrant County Hospital District, which owns and operates John Peter Smith Hospital near downtown Fort Worth. Many Benbrook residents used to use the now-closed military hospital facilities at Carswell Air Force Base and must now travel to other military facilities.

In 1980, the City established a Benbrook Hospital Authority, in anticipation of the potential location of a major hospital in Benbrook. However, with changes in the approval procedures and the cancellation of the proposed hospital project, the Hospital Authority Board of Directors were never reappointed.

For the most part, medical care is provided by private physicians in Benbrook or in the adjacent areas of Fort Worth. There are currently five medical professional offices and seven dentists or orthodontics offices located in Benbrook, plus numerous others in nearby Fort Worth. There are four pharmacies located in Benbrook. There does not appear to be any shortage of medical care providers in Benbrook.

The City provides emergency medical care through its ambulance service. A more detailed description of this operation is provided in the Public Safety element of the Comprehensive Plan.

With an aging population, the need for adequate health care will continue to increase. It is expected that sufficient health care will continue to be provided by a mix of public and private agencies and entities, without the need for additional services provided by the City of Benbrook.

14.3 SOCIAL SERVICES

Social service needs may include education (illiteracy), substance abuse counseling, employment counseling and job training, childcare, family dysfunction, access to health care and income security and assistance. With a decentralization of governmental services from the federal to the local level, the City Council recognizes that there may be an increasing demand for the provision of social services by the City of Benbrook. To address this concern, the City Council adopted the following strategy in 1989:

The City should establish a Task Force or other advisory body to review and identify social service needs within the community.

In January 1991, the City Council appointed a 14-member Social Services Task Force. This group presented its final report to the City Council on May 21, 1992. The Task Force found that there were already sufficient agencies and services available to serve Benbrook's social service needs. It was their recommendation that an independent nonprofit organization be established to provide a telephone referral service to the existing social service agencies. To date, no further action on this matter has occurred.

The City has now adopted the following objective and strategy for the provision of services:

OBJECTIVE 7.3: The City should review the social service needs of the City and identify mechanisms to provide these services.

Strategy 7.3.1: The City should encourage and facilitate the provision of social services through private initiatives such as neighborhood groups, churches, and social organizations.

Historically, Benbrook has not been a direct provider of social services. There are no areas of Benbrook with significant pockets of poverty or other major social problems. If an individual resident is in need of such services, they are generally directed to providers such as Tarrant County, United Way and other private agencies. Most often, the Police Department is the first to respond to a social service need, and officers are trained to refer problems to the appropriate social service agency in the County. The police Department reports that approximately eight percent of their miscellaneous calls during 1990 related to family disturbances, which are often referred to other agencies.

There is very little information available on the social service needs of the citizens of Benbrook. In 1993, the United Way for Tarrant County published a Needs Assessment based on an interview process with service providers. The survey was divided into 16 geographic areas, one of which was Benbrook, Crowley, Everman, Kennedale, and the surrounding unincorporated area of the County, extending from I-30 to Mansfield. The inclusion of the unincorporated area skews the findings, as does the reliance on service providers, but the survey does provide an indication of the type of service needs that may be present in the Benbrook area. The survey found that the Benbrook area had low incidence of most of the problems found elsewhere in the

elsewhere in the County, but did have relatively high incidence of child abuse and high usage of hospital-based care.

A reflection of the types of needs can be discerned from the services provided by various United Way agencies (see Table 14.3). This table presents a count of all services provided, including simply providing information. Therefore, it is difficult to determine how many people were actually in need of assistance.

One area where Benbrook has provided services is in senior citizens programs. Benbrook has an aging population and the demand for programs for residents over 60 years old will continue to increase. The total number of residents over the age of 60 years has more than doubled since 1980. Perhaps more significantly, the proportion of the population over 60 years of age has increased by 60 percent since 1980. The 1990 Census indicates that 9.66 percent of the population is over 65 years of age, slightly higher than the County as a whole

Benbrook has provided a senior citizens center since 1975 when the City purchased the old Senior Citizens/Community Center at 228 San Angelo Street. A new Senior Citizens Center was constructed at 1010 Mercedes Street in the Municipal Complex using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. The Center is scheduled to be expanded in 1992 with the availability of additional CDBG funds. The City funds the salary for the Senior Citizens Director. The Senior Citizens organization has grown dramatically in recent years, with current membership estimated at approximately 400 members.

A second area of potential need is in day care facilities. As more families consist of single parents or two wage earners, more day care facilities are required. Benbrook currently has four privately operated day care facilities. In addition, some Benbrook families utilize day care facilities outside of the Benbrook city limits and others utilize various home care services. It is expected that the private sector will continue to provide sufficient day care facilities to handle the demand. Commercial day care facilities are licensed and inspected by the Texas Department of Human Resources.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), effective in January 1992, requires that the City make reasonable accommodations and access to public facilities by disabled persons. The City adopted an ADA Transition Plan in 1992 under the administration of the Assistant City Manager. Modifications were made to the City Hall, Central Fire Station, and Community Center in 1994, to accommodate handicapped access. Other City buildings were already in compliance. The City is currently installing wheelchair ramps at intersections and is making plans to improve access at City playgrounds.

Table 14.3
Number of People Served by United Way Agencies
Benbrook, Texas

Agency	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Medical Assistance:						
Arthritis Foundation	1143	822	895	913	576	NA
Easter Seal Society	21	18	31	10	35	23
Sickle Cell Anemia Assoc.	168	140	130	98	110	92
Cancer Care Services	NA	13	8	13	10	8
Multiple Sclerosis	4	5	7	13	12	15
United Cerebral Palsy	6	8	8	9	7	6
Mental and Physical Handicaps						
Assoc. of Retarded Citizens	263	214	182	NA	74	12
Mental Health Assoc.	120	206	54	199	40	113
Family, Substance, Women's Shelters						
Child Study Center	58	54	55	48	48	39
Day Care Association	2	47	39	19	39	38
Family Services	572	29	50	559	454	81
Adolescent Pregnancy Board	0	5	12	73	0	NA
Lena Pope Home	2	1	2	0	0	2
Parenting Guidance Center	102	173	217	239	117	142
Council on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse	216	45	218	1205	440	325
Women's Center	45	237	45	50	50	49
Women's Haven	22	3	6	3	15	18
Senior Citizens						
Retired Senior Volunteer Program	8	7	11	10	19	14
Senior Citizen's Services	187	230	209	226	191	16
General Assistance						
Catholic Social Services	34	21	34	57	62	70
Danciger Jewish Community Center	163	163	8	8	8	NA
First Call for Help	115	107	128	135	109	155
Jewish Social Service Agency	6	48	3	2	8	22
Salvation Army	0	2	13	8	5	84
American Red Cross	697	377	45	81	69	99
Youth						
Boy Scouts of America	385	260	266	234	221	229
Camp Fire	210	228	223	201	204	285
Girl Scouts of America	307	343	416	318	287	268
YMCA	3505	1707	1788	1828	2452	2456

Source: United Way of Tarrant County