



City of Clute

Housing Vision Plan

2025

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary i

Project Background 1

Project Need and Purpose 2

Public Engagement..... 3

 • Phase One 3

 • Phase Two 4

Final Recommendations 5

 • Shanks Lake Concept Revision 5

 • Policy Updates 6

 • Cost Estimates 6

Conclusion..... 7

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A special thanks goes out to the countless City staff, H-GAC staff, and Clute residents who volunteered their time to provide feedback and make this project a success.



Clute City Council is presented the 2024 Silver Planning Achievement award in Urban Design from the Houston, Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association (APATX) for the Clute Livable Centers Study

A message from Mayor Calvin Shiflet



“On behalf of the City of Clute, we want to express our deepest gratitude to the Houston-Galveston Area Council’s Community and Environmental Planning team for their expertise and guidance, and to the hundreds of residents and visitors who generously shared their time and feedback through surveys, public meetings, and community events. Your voices have been vital in shaping a clear and thoughtful vision for an affordable housing development in Clute. This plan is stronger because of each of you, and we are grateful for your commitment to Clute’s future.”



Executive Summary

H-GAC's Housing Vision Plans are designed to help local governments better understand the housing-related needs and priorities of their communities. The plan combines data analysis and public engagement to co-create a community vision and a practical roadmap to achieve it.

The City of Clute, in southern Brazoria County, is home to about 11,000 residents. The community is predominantly Hispanic/Latino and largely bilingual, with a blue-collar workforce tied to petrochemical employers such as Dow and BASF. The average age in Clute is 30 years old, and young couples with one or no children and older adults whose children have moved out make up 65% of the households in the city.

Building on the 2023 Clute Livable Centers Study, the Clute Housing Vision Plan translates the community's vision into an implementable path for redeveloping Shanks Lake. The plan refines prior recommendations to strengthen the downtown core and diversify nearby housing options to improve affordability while preserving the rural character that residents value. It adds site-level detail and provides clear guidance to developers and City leadership on the community's preferred building materials, architectural styles, and amenities.

Shanks Lake - Existing



Community feedback guided every step and was centered around the question: "What does the future of housing look like in Clute?" specifically along Shanks Lake. Engagement occurred in two phases: a community open house and online survey to gather preferences on architectural style, materials, density, amenities, and lake access; followed by three days of outreach at the Great Texas Mosquito Festival, where visitors could provide feedback and vote for the proposed renderings they liked best.

Based on this input, the plan recommends a Cottage Court along Shanks Lake: **29 one- to two-bedroom, 800- to 1,000 square-foot homes with a mix of private and shared covered parking.** To enable modestly higher densities, smaller lots, and reduced setbacks, the plan recommends policy updates to establish a special district. These moderately priced homes would increase homeownership attainability, offer right-sized options for smaller households, strengthen walkability, and support local businesses by adding households near the town center. Precedents from Oklahoma and Georgia demonstrate the feasibility, versatility, and affordability of the Cottage Court model, reinforcing this community-backed path forward.

Shanks Lake - Proposed (2023)



The latest Shanks Lake redevelopment proposal, shown below, prioritizes the pedestrian realm. The rendering reduces the amount of impervious surface dedicated to each home and increases the number of proposed homes from 26 to 29. More importantly, the shift from duplexes to a Cottage Court enhances privacy by replacing shared walls with detached cottages and *orients entries and porches toward pedestrian spaces rather than driveways*. A recurring request was covered parking to beat the Texas heat; the proposal addresses this with red shade sails over the resident parking lot. With shared open space, low-maintenance landscaping, consolidated parking, and reduced cost, this housing type appeals to first-time buyers, young working families, and downsizing adults who want the convenience of multifamily living with the privacy of a stand-alone home.



Shanks Lake - Revision (2025)



Introduction

Project Background

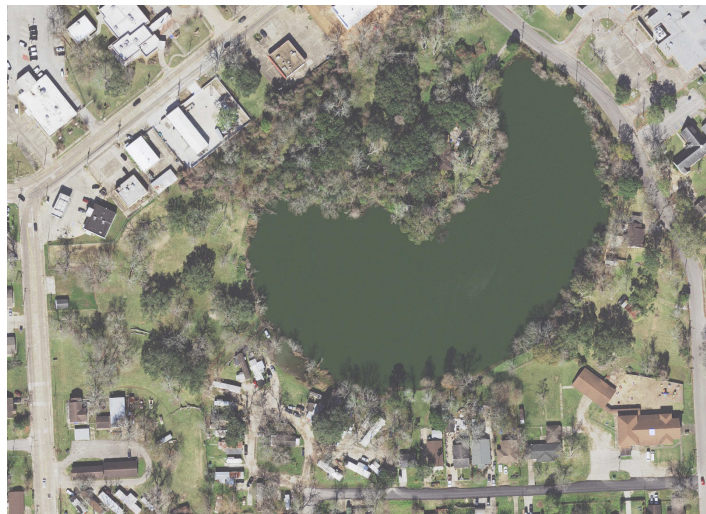
The Clute Housing Vision Plan builds on the 2023 Clute Livable Centers Study, a community-driven plan to guide growth in a way that meets the needs of the community while preserving the rural look and feel that attracts families to Clute. The study identified multiple projects that would help the city establish a formal downtown, increase community gathering space, diversify housing options and increase homeownership affordability, and improve mobility and safety for all road users.

One of the study's major recommendations is the redevelopment of Shanks Lake (formerly Clute Lake)—an underutilized natural asset along Main Street in the heart of the city. The community's vision for this area includes improving public access to the lake, creating family-friendly parks and gathering spaces, and providing areas for farmers markets and community events. A key element of this vision is the addition of medium-density housing. By introducing a range of medium-density housing options in a walkable and well-connected setting, the project aims to improve housing affordability, support local businesses, and strengthen economic opportunities for both current and future Clute residents.

The purpose of this Vision Plan is to refine and add detail to the original Shanks Lake redevelopment concept. The initial renderings illustrated to residents the idea of redevelopment and helped City leaders understand the scale of the project. However, further refinement and additional detail was necessary before this project is ready for implementation. This refinement is done using additional feedback from the community.

This plan will offer guidance to City leadership and interested developers, outlining exactly what residents would like to see along the lake.

Shanks Lake - Existing



Shanks Lake - Proposed (2023)



What is medium-density housing?

Any housing type that falls between single-family houses and large apartment complexes can be considered medium-density. Think of townhomes, duplexes, or Cottage Courts. These homes are often designed to fit comfortably within existing neighborhoods. They look and feel more like homes than high-rises, and they are less expensive than a traditional house. This allows more families to live closer to schools, churches, local businesses, and other destinations near the center of town.

Project Need and Purpose

During the 2023 Livable Centers Study, residents repeatedly expressed concerns about maintaining the rural look and feel that first attracted them to Clute. With steady population growth of about 1% or 100 residents every 3 years, City leaders recognize the importance of guiding development in ways that reflect community values. A community-driven approach to planning for redevelopment, rather than a traditional developer-driven approach, will ensure that the needs and desires of the community are at the forefront of the decision-making progress.

Clute has seen a decrease in the share of renter-occupied homes, from 54.5% in 2018 to 49.2% in 2023. In the same five year time frame, there has been an increase in the number of renters who are cost burdened. Cost burdened is a term used to define a household that spends 30% or more of their income on their rent or mortgage. The percentage of cost burdened renters has increased from 40% to 50.4%. Additionally, median rent has increased by nearly \$200 to about \$1,200 per month, but it is still considered broadly affordable relative to the City’s median household income of approximately \$66,000.

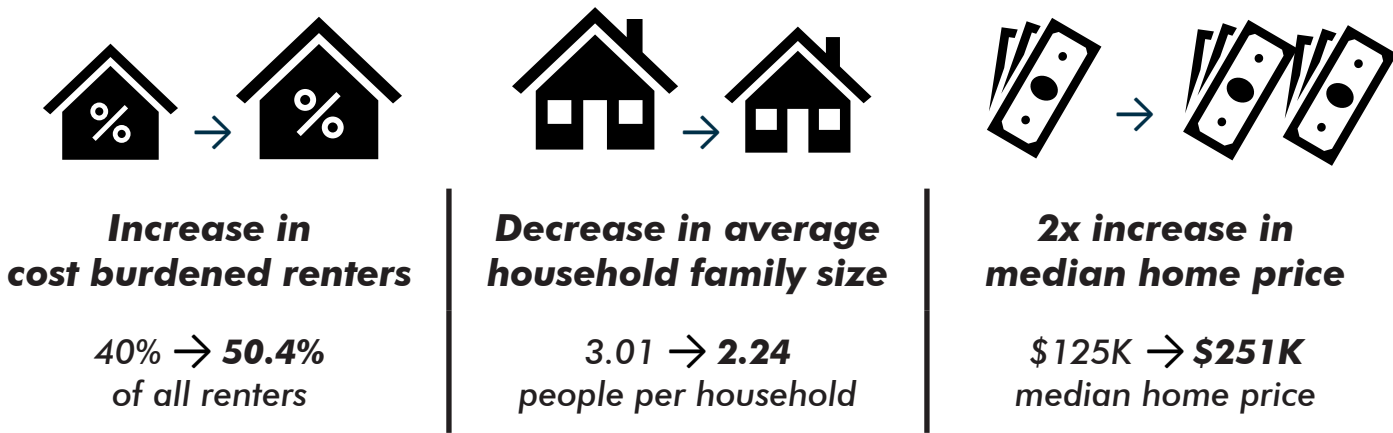
In contrast, homeownership has become significantly less attainable. The median home value today is \$251,000, a sharp increase from \$125,000 in 2018. This price far exceeds what

is considered affordable for the City of Clute’s current median household income. A home’s target sell price would need to be at or below \$180,000 to be considered attainable and affordable.

Given these challenges, the City of Clute would benefit from a new approach to housing development. Reliance on large apartment complexes and single-family homes no longer meets the evolving needs of residents. This document will outline strategies to diversify housing options in the heart of Clute.

Diversifying housing options can:

- Increase homeownership opportunities by offering smaller homes at a lower price point.
- Offer right-sized options for seniors and small families who might not have a need for a multi-bedroom home but still desire the privacy of a standalone home.
- Support walkability and reduce transportation costs by concentrating households near the center of town.
- Support local businesses by increasing the number of people that live near those businesses.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. “ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates.”

Public Engagement

The Shanks Lake concept developed during the Livable Centers Study was an initial vision that required refinement before it is ready for implementation. To do this, the project team prioritized gathering feedback from residents centered around a guiding question, “What does the future of housing look like in Clute?” H-GAC Community and Environmental Planning staff collaborated with City staff to offer multiple opportunities for the community to provide input.

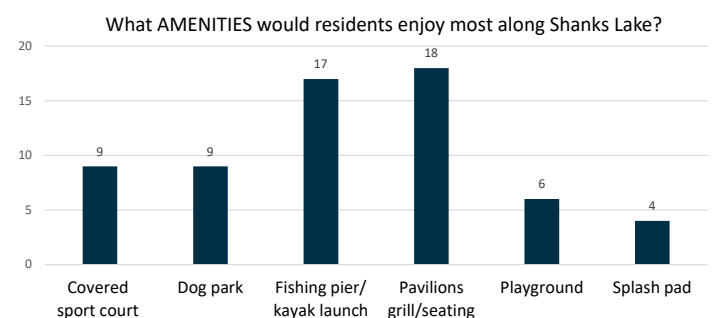
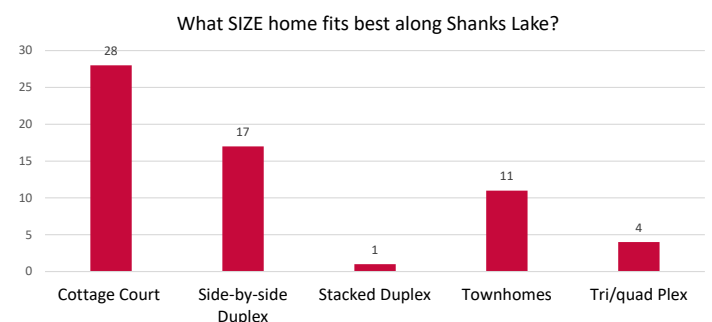
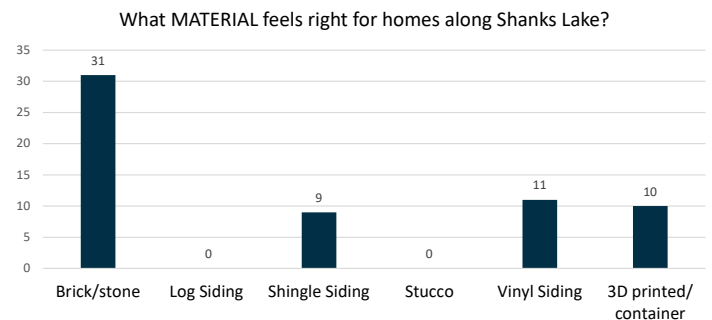
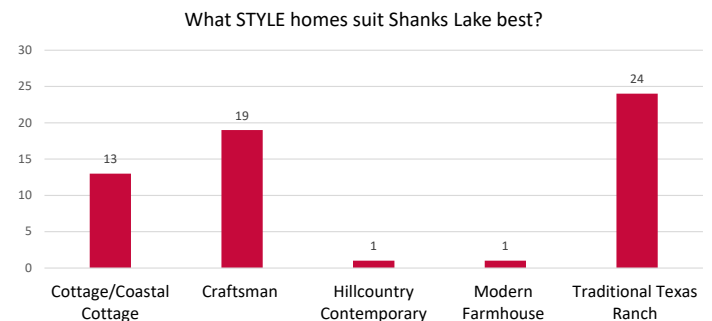
Engagement occurred in two phases. **Phase one** included a community open house and an online survey designed to narrow the choices to two preferred concepts for phase two. Both the open house and the survey asked residents about preferred building materials, architectural style, housing density, and amenities for the Shanks Lake area.

Using the feedback gathered in phase one, the project team developed a series of boards, large educational posters, to be displayed for phase two. **Phase two** involved three consecutive days of engagement at The Great Texas Mosquito Festival, an annual music festival that draws thousands of attendees from across the region to the heart of the City of Clute. For the festival, the project team hosted a booth to display the three boards and engage with as many people as possible. The boards included a project overview of the Clute Housing Vision Plan and the top two choices from phase one—A) a more traditional side-by-side duplex and B) a cottage court of small homes.



Phase One Results:

The series of bar charts below summarize the responses to the four questions asked in the phase one survey. The results combine input from the in-person community open house, hosted at the Clute Parks and Recreation building, and the online survey promoted through the City of Clute’s social media pages.

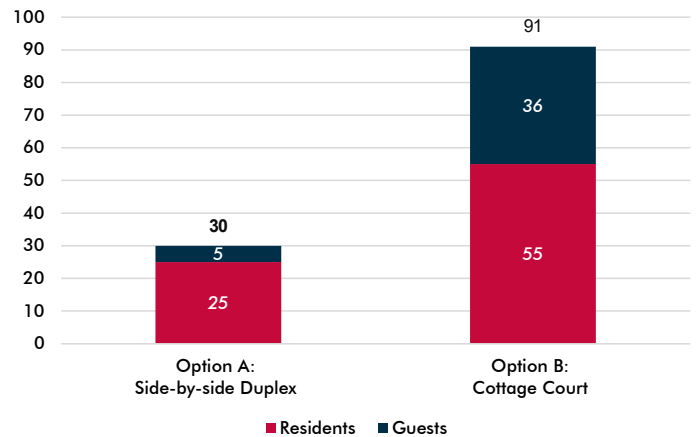


Phase Two Results:

Because the Mosquito Festival is a regional draw, the project team used different-colored stickers to distinguish Clute residents (red) from festival visitors (green). This approach enabled the team to separate resident and visitor responses and, if the results were close, to prioritize resident input.

After three consecutive days at the outreach booth, the team collected input from **121 participants** and had productive conversations with several others. Option B (Cottage Court) received more than three times as many votes as Option A, making it the clear favorite among residents and visitors alike.

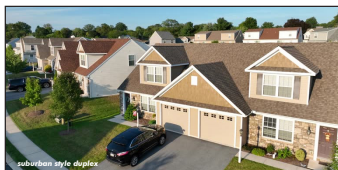
Several participants who voted for Option A reported they would have chosen Option B if it included covered parking or a detached garage.



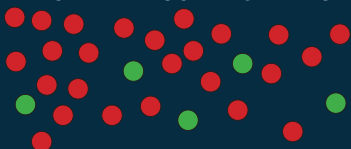
Combined 3-day Mosquito Festival survey results.

Option A: Side-by-side Duplex

Two homes that share a wall, each with their own small yards and entrance. These homes fit comfortably into established neighborhoods without disrupting the existing look and feel while still increasing the number of homes available in an area.



Cast your vote by placing a sticky dot here:



Option B: Cottage Court

A cluster of homes arranged around a shared courtyard. Each home is private, but neighbors share parking space and outdoor areas. These homes are typically smaller than traditional single-family homes, meaning you can fit more than one in a smaller space.



Cast your vote by placing a sticky dot here:



Final Recommendations

Shanks Lake Concept Revision

Based on public engagement results, the preferred concept for the southwestern edge of Shanks Lake is a Cottage Court. Renderings on this page illustrate the revised proposal. Homes would be one or two bedrooms and range from 800- to 1,000- square feet. The development will include shared community gathering spaces and improved access to Shanks Lake.

Survey participants identified Texas Ranch and Craftsman as their preferred architectural styles. They also expressed a preference for durable, cost-effective materials—such as brick and vinyl siding—both of which are compatible with Texas Ranch and Craftsman designs.

The latest site plan proposal, shown below, prioritizes the pedestrian realm by orienting entries and porches toward pedestrian spaces rather than driveways. The rendering also reduces the amount of impervious surface dedicated to each home and **increases the number of proposed homes from 26 to 29: 12 with private parking and 17 with shared covered and on-street parking.** Homes with private parking are expected to be priced at a premium due to higher construction and land costs. Offering both options reflects strong community interest to include covered parking while keeping some homes more attainable.

What is a Cottage Court?

A Cottage Court is a cluster of small detached homes, (typically 800 to 1200 square feet) that share parking and outdoor space. Compared to conventional single-family homes, these houses sit closer together on smaller lots, allowing more homes on the same acreage. Common areas are maintained by a third party and costs are shared by residents, helping lower property and upkeep costs per home. This model appeals to first-time buyers, young working families, and downsizing adults who want the convenience of multifamily living with the privacy of a stand-alone house.



Brick Texas Ranch style home
Source: stock.adobe.com



Southern Craftsman style home
Source: stock.adobe.com



Updated Shanks Lake redevelopment site plan



Rendering showing Cottage Court along Shanks Lake

Policy Updates

According to the City's most recent zoning map, the area surrounding Shanks Lake is zoned R-1 (Single-Family Residential) and C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial). To enable the preferred Cottage Court housing typology, zoning amendments are required. Establishing a special district is the most appropriate path, as the current ordinances do not permit the higher densities, smaller minimum lot sizes, and reduced setbacks needed to accommodate Cottage Courts.

Cost Estimates

The following examples demonstrate the scalability, versatility, and affordability of the Cottage Court model. Despite differences in design and price, both advance the same goal: expanding affordability and homeownership opportunities for households near the community's median income level.

In 2012, The Borough at Carlton Landing in Oklahoma piloted a relatively small experiment as part of a larger initiative aimed at "elevating the quality of life" in a suburban community. Eight cottages ranging from 800- to 1,400-square feet each, were arranged on a third of an acre. These particular homes were constructed using brick load bearing walls. Brick homes are more expensive than the typical wooden-framed houses we are accustomed to in the US, but even then, the builder was able to erect the eight structures in under four weeks, at a cost of roughly \$50,000 per home (around \$69,000 in 2025 dollars), excluding the cost of utilities and amenities.

In Georgia, the Decatur Land Trust, Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership, and Fortas Homes, partnered to develop the Oak Cottage Court, a collection of single-family cottages in an affluent suburb northeast of Atlanta. Homes offered one to three bedrooms and sold for \$210,000 to \$305,000, providing an attainable option for middle-income households in an otherwise unattainable area in Georgia.

For Clute, with a median income of \$66,000, target sale prices should be at or below \$180,000. There are many factors that contribute to the price of a home, but based on the assumptions outlined in the table below, we estimate that the Shanks Lake redevelopment could feature homes built around \$112,000 to \$205,000. This means these homes could be sold at a price that is attainable for the median income of Clute.

Expense	Cost ranges
Land clearing and preparation	\$2,500 - \$5,000
Foundation	\$4,500 - \$10,000
Contractor labor cost	\$20,000 - \$40,000
Utility connections	\$5,500 - \$20,000
Permits and fees	\$500 - \$5,000
Additions (deck, garage, etc.)	\$9,000 - \$20,000
Prefab 1-story, 2 bed/1 bath (800 - 1,000 sqft.)	\$70,000 - \$85,000
Total	\$112,000 - 205,000

Source: remodelingcalculator.org (2025 prices)



The Borough, courtesy of Carlton Landing, OK.



The Oak Cottage Court, courtesy of Decatur, GA.

Conclusion

The Clute Housing Vision Plan represents the City's commitment to proactively working to meet the needs of the growing community. Since the completion of the Clute Livable Centers Study in 2023, City leadership has made significant progress toward realizing the community's vision, including establishing a Livable Centers Downtown Development Task Force of council members, business owners, and property owners to advance the study's recommendations.

This plan aims to expand attainable homeownership opportunities while maintaining the community's small-town character. Rising housing costs, an increasing number of cost-burdened renters, decreasing household family sizes, and steady population growth means the City of Clute and its residents would benefit from a new approach to housing development. Building on the Livable Centers Study and refining the Shanks Lake redevelopment concept, this plan translates community input into an implementable action plan.

Cottage Court housing is the most appropriate fit for this community. Right-sized homes provide privacy, support walkability, and deliver attainable price points without sacrificing quality or character. This type of housing uses land efficiently, complements adjacent neighborhoods, and increases use of Shanks Lake. It also reflects the strongest public support among the proposed alternatives, aligning cost, character, and livability.

For the City of Clute, this document establishes a framework for action. It illustrates a shared vision for the center of town, outlines targeted policy updates, and provides a strategy to increase housing stock at an attainable price point. Shanks Lake is only the beginning, once this concept is proven, it can be used as a model for other parts of town. With this plan the City of Clute is positioned to move from vision to implementation.





References:

City of Clute Livable Centers Study, <https://www.h-gac.com/livable-centers/planning-studies/city-of-clute-livable-centers-study>

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Pre-fab home building cost estimates: <https://www.remodelingcalculator.org/house-building-calculator/>

The Borough of Carlton Landing, Oklahoma: <https://www.cnu.org/what-we-do/build-great-places/borough>
Oak Cottage Court, Decatur Land Trust: <https://decaturlandtrust.org/oak/>



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